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THE PROSTITUTE IN AFRICAN LITERATURE

BY

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A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE

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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled THE PROSTITUTE IN AFRICAN LITERATURE submitted by Fikeni E.M.K. Senkoro in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Supervisor

Date 27th August 1979

To my dear wife, Hawa, and our
beloved children, Chichi and Mbazi.
I am sorry for the long loneliness
which, however, bore fruits.

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the position and role of the prostitute in selected African literature written in English, French and Swahili. It looks into various ways in which African authors have treated the prostitute in their works, and by so doing it analyses why and how some authors have interlinked the prostitute with the social, political, and economic realities of their societies, and also why and how others have, in fact, used the prostitute further to mystify and distort realities in their societies. In probing into the treatment of the prostitute in this manner the main aim of the thesis has been to make an analysis of the social class aspects of the prostitute in African literature.

The thesis is divided into four chapters: Chapter One, "Negative Treatment: The Prostitute in selected works by Abdoulaye Sadji, Mohamed S. Mohamed and David G. Maillu," looks at the negative use of the prostitute in African literature; Chapter Two, "The Prostitute and the Protest Tradition" examines selected works by Mongo Beti, Okello Oculi, Okot p'Bitek, Mohamed S. Mohamed, and W.E. Mkufya, and tries to see how the prostitute has featured in the protest tradition in African literature; Chapter Three, "The Way Out," analyses the solutions for the predicament of the prostitute as given in selected works by Cyprian Ekwensi, Ndyanao Balisidya, Sembene Ousmane, Mohamed S. Mohamed and Ngugi wa Thiong'o.

To round off the thesis, and as a way of suggesting some other approaches which can be used to probe further into the role and position of the prostitute in African literature, the final chapter,

"Further Avenues of Exploration: The Prostitute in World Literature" looks at the role of the prostitute in world literature vis a vis that of the prostitute in African literature.

The nature of the thesis has limited the scope to a survey rather than a close critical analysis, although at times I have attempted to make such analysis whenever the chance has occured.

INTRODUCTION

WHY THE PROSTITUTE?

Over the past few years, a phenomenal amount of criticism has been written about African literature. In spite of this, there has been no comprehensive treatment of the subject of the position and role of the prostitute in that literature. Why the prostitute? This seems to be the question asked almost immediately by various "serious" critics of the literature. It might, indeed, be necessary for the heretical critic who dares to break the rules and taboos in the field, to justify his dealings with the forbidden, "dirty" subject of prostitutes and prostitution. For, to the majority of critics of African literature, it seems that it is simply unheard of for the word "prostitute" to appear in the indexes of their works. So, to them, the problem facing the daring critic is not only to make a preliminary announcement of the subject but even to prove beyond reasonable doubts that such a subject exists and that it can be discussed alongside the other "serious" and "critical" subjects in African literature. A suspicious beginning indeed!

Yet, ironically enough, African literature is literally flooding with dayless cities, "notorious" red-light streets, "shebeens" and cheap cafes filled with girls of the street, ladies of the night, and painted women beckoning from numerous windows and balconies, using all their profession's tactics to attract the eyes of critics. They are begging to be analysed and examined. Scholars and critics, however,

seem to have always pretended to close their eyes, ears, and noses whenever they pass through the numerous stinking slum areas in the world of African literature where the prostitute is surrounded by "stubborn stench of undrained urine," drops of dead semen, vomit, human excrement, pus, sweat, blood, flies, bedbugs, mosquitos, curses and artificial moans. The critics have taken the above attitude even in spite (or is it because?) of various prostitutes in African literature such as in Okello Oculi's Prostitute (1968) and Okot p'Bitek's Song of Malaya (Lit. "Song of Prostitute") (1971) who have said over and over again that among their long and wide clientele, students and research scholars (literary critics included) feature rather prominently at nights!

In this thesis, I have tried to open wide my senses and to heed the beckonings of the prostitutes in African literature written in English, French and Swahili. The results have indicated that the prostitute has not only been a recurring character in African literature; she has, indeed, become one of the major literary motifs in Africa. This neglected motif, a wide subject in itself, embraces all the aspects of the lives of the people in Africa, if not in all neo-colonies: social, political, economic, and, most important for our purposes, cultural.

As a necessary preliminary treatment of the topic, I have chosen to focus on an analysis of the social class aspects of the prostitute in African literature. In order to give this aspect maximum exposure, I have divided the thesis into four major areas of concern which, I feel, will stir further discussion, including fuller formalistic

deliberation by better qualified critics.

Since the thesis has followed the inevitable principles of the dialectical motion and growth of society towards a more progressive social, political and economic environment, naturally its take-off point has been with the negative treatment of the prostitute by some African authors. The main thesis here is that such treatment -- pessimistic and fatalistic as it has been -- has used the prostitute further to mystify and distort realities in African societies.

Chapter Two deals with the important question of the way the prostitute is involved and engaged in the protest tradition in African literature. The chapter illustrates that the prostitute is not only protesting against her individual degrading environment, but her protests involve the over-all capitalist system and all its consequences. At this level, however, authors have shown either total neglect or some kind of evasion of the topic of the way out for the prostitute. Among other reasons, the chapter indicates how, possibly, the fear of censorship in the case of such authors like Oculi in Prostitute and W.E. Mkufya in The Wicked Walk (1978) might have affected their style and approach to the question in their books.

Chapter Three deals with the most important question of the way out for the prostitute. It is, basically, divided into two main parts: First is the examination of literary works which have suggested ways out for the prostitute but which, according to the thesis' social class analysis, are wrong or unrealizable solutions. In the case of authors such as Ekwensi in Jagua Nana (1961) and Ndyanao Balisidya in Shida (1975), it is shown that their school of "mechanical back to the

countryside" is a far-fetched and reformist solution which deals with individual prostitutes while leaving the institution of prostitution untouched. The second part of this chapter looks at relevant works of Sembene Ousmane, Mohamed S. Mohamed, and Ngugi wa Thiong'o, which are among the few African literary works which have explicitly or implicitly suggested the correct way out for the prostitute. This part of the chapter links the prostitute's struggles with the struggles of the poor, oppressed classes against the exploiting upper classes, and the main thesis here is that only through such class struggle will the final victory of the prostitute and her fellow sufferers be won.

Finally, Chapter Four is the most ambitious section of the study begun in this thesis, though it only introduces the topic of the role and position of the prostitute in world literature. Because of the natural limitations of an MA thesis, this chapter can only cursorily indicate further avenues of exploration into the subject of the role of the prostitute in African literature. Hence, the chapter is largely prospective and not at all representative and exhaustive. It tries to look into European and American literature for possible sources of stereotypes of prostitutes in African literature, models of discussion about prostitutes in literature, and non-literary forces such as censorship which affect and put parameters around "realism" and prostitution. Thus, the chapter's main aim is to look into the future of the prostitute in African literature and suggest other avenues of exploration.

Eyebrows will definitely be raised because of some significant omissions. Those who are well-versed in Swahili literature will inevitably point at such authors as Euphrase Kezilahabi in his novel, Rosa Mistika (1972) and M.S. Ahmed in Asali Chungu (Lit. "Bitter

Honey") (1977) among many others. Again, the whole thesis is aimed mainly at being -- hopefully -- representative and not completely extensive. It has been necessary to eliminate some texts, therefore, principally to avoid repetition and to be comprehensive in dealing with the selected works. For example, while Rosa Mistika deals with the subject in connection with strict upbringing and corrupt religious and educational institutions, I feel that the approach in Mongo Beti's Le pauvre Christ de Bomba (1956) and Abdoulaye Sadji's Maimouna (1958) is much more suited to the flow of this thesis' analysis than it is in the former. The same with M.S. Ahmed's Asali Chungu which I had to eliminate with difficulties, even pain, in favour of Mohamed S. Mohamed's Nyota ya Rehema (1976).

It is impossible, in an M.A. Thesis, to exhaust all that can be said concerning the position and role of the prostitute in African literature. It is evident, and I am aware of the fact, that perhaps this thesis, being a mere M.A. work, has done much less than justice to the large diversity of the subject of the prostitute in African literature. However, it is hoped that more than constituting a a tentative enquiry to the topic, the thesis will be the beginning of an open and wide discussion into this subject which has been left virtually untouched by critics' pens.

THANKSGIVING

First, I am very grateful to my supervisor, Prof. S. Arnold for his patient guidance; and I wish to thank the members of my Oral Exam Committee, Profs. S. Arnold, E.D. Blodgett, and D. Barnet, who made my defence a fruitful and peaceful event which called for no guns or bazookas. My other thanks are to the University of Alberta in general, and the Department of Comparative Literature in particular for their material and moral support. I wish to thank too the University of Dar-es-Salaam, especially my Department of Kiswahili for having let me cross the seas in spite of the acute shortage of academic staff. Also I am indebted to Hawa, Chichi, Mbazi and my students at Dar who kept on writing me encouraging and loving letters. And, of course, my special thanks to Margriet who, amazingly enough, was able to read my beautiful, unreadable handwriting and type the thesis under pressure instead of going out to sun tan.

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CHAPTER ONE

NEGATIVE TREATMENT: THE PROSTITUTE IN SELECTED WORKS OF ABDOULAYE SADJI, DAVID G. MAILLU, AND MOHAMED S. MOHAMED

"A fine example of cacology fed on neo-colonialist pulp," so said one East African literary critic, Christopher Mulei, in his review article[1] which dismissed Charles Mangua's "pulp" novel, A Tail in the Mouth.[2] I feel that a similar dismissal is also merited by various other works in African literature which have dealt with the prostitute. This chapter uses Abdoulaye Sadji's Maimouna,[3] David G. Maillu's Unfit for Human Consumption[4] and Mohamed S. Mohamed's Kiu[5] -- three novels, to test the hypothesis. At the same time, Mulei's apt comment requires fuller analysis than that critic himself provides. This task is carried out too in this chapter.

If one examines the large spectrum of African literature to date, one finds that it has, basically, tried to come to grips with the primary problems emanating from colonialism, struggle for independence, and from neo-colonialism.

Abdoulaye Sadji is one of the African writers who have dealt with the above situations in their works. His approach, as will be seen, is of a different orientation from that of Maillu and Mohamed. It belongs to the purely moralistic school of thought which, however, when examined closely, boils down to the same world outlook as that of Mohamed and Maillu in their works. This is why the three authors have been chosen to represent negative examples of authors' treatments of the prostitute in their literary works.

Abdoulaye Sadji (1910-1961), a close friend of Leopold Sedar Senghor,[6] attended koranic primary schools, and these seem to have cemented the foundations for his moralistic-cum-religious approach to life in general. At the age of 11, he was transferred to French-run grammar schools and later studied at a teachers' training college where he graduated with a diploma in 1929. In 1932 Sadji obtained his French Bachelor's degree after which he worked as director of a school in his home town, and as an inspector for primary grades while at the same time working as director of the state schools in Rufisque. He contributed to productions for Senegal Radio and has had a long teaching career in various Senegalese schools.[7]

Sadji, in collaboration with Leopold Sedar Senghor, wrote a school reader, La belle histoire de Leuk-Le Lievre which was published in 1953 with the major goal of providing an alternative to the French school texts which had nothing African in them and which dominated and continue to dominate much of the francophone African education today. Among other publications of Sadji's, Maimouna: La petite fille noire (Dakar, 1953, and Paris, 1958), and his succeeding novelette, Nini, mulatresse du Senegal published in Trois ecrivains noirs (Paris: Presence Africaine, 1954), and a collection of stories under the title of Tounka, nouvelle africaine are the most prominent ones.

Inspite of his output, Sadji's works have received very little critical recognition and appreciation. This, perhaps, is an indication of something lacking in them. The main focus of my discussion here will be on the "something lacking" in Sadji's treatment of Maimouna the "prostitute" in his Maimouna: La petite fille noire.

The work appeared first as a short story -- "Maimouna, petite fille

noire" -- which in turn became the original study for Sadji's full length novel. Maimouna: La petite fille noire -- like most of other Sadji's works -- is devoted to the "world of the hybrid society of Dakar and the old port city of Saint Louis," to quote Donald E. Herdeck.[8] In the novel we see Maimouna first as a young, beautiful girl doing most of her work in the house in her home village, Louga. Then her elder sister, Rihana, who is married to a well-off civil servant, Bounama, comes and convinces their mother, Daro, that it would be good for Maimouna to go and live with them in the city of Dakar. Maimouna travels with her elder sister to Dakar where after a while she becomes pregnant and returns to her village. Sick with smallpox, Maimouna loses her baby and she gets disfigured. With that burden, Maimouna becomes a market woman.

Such is the novel's story line -- simplistic, and rather naive. A reader can almost predict what will happen in this prodigal daughter story; and when it is hard to guess it is not only for the reader but also for the author who has to utilize some dubious devices such as coincidental eavesdropping to make ends meet. In the final analysis the whole tale turns into a moral sermon, completely disregarding the major social, political, and economic determinants of all events and relations between people.

Maimouna: La petite fille noire deals with a very intricate subject, the contradiction between town and country and the breakdown of "norms of morality." These are, however, dealt with in a very shallow and simplistic manner so that instead of examining, in a concrete way, the root causes of the conflicts which the novel deals with, Sadji lays all

blame on the Senegalese people, on people like Maimouna, for being driven from the land by their exploiters into the new city culture. Maimouna is therefore blamed for her being attracted to and corrupted by the dangerous city of Dakar and it seems to me that even her return to her village of Louga is not a way of rehabilitation but a fulfillment of the sin-and-retribution motif. With this narrow and shallow outlook, the author does not care to examine the reasons why there is such a big economic gap between people like Maimouna's treacherous lover Doudou Diouf on one side, who cheats, uses, destroys, and abandons the poverty-stricken people like Maimouna who belong to the other side.

The city of Dakar and its people are represented in the novel by Maimouna's sister, Rihanna, who, in fact, is the one who insists on Maimouna's coming to the city, not really for the financial considerations for their mother as she claims, but because she wants to sell her younger sister and add another rich man to the family. In this manner, Rihanna becomes a pimp, an "instrument of evil" as she turns her younger sister into a prostitute. On the other hand, Maimouna is a very naive village girl who gets trapped easily into accepting a city man and trusting all those who are around her. Yet the moralistic outlook of the novel does not take the fact of inexperience as an excuse for Maimouna's foolish behaviour. Like Bahati in Kiu, Maimouna has to suffer the consequences, and in the end, she does.

Thus, the overall outlook of Sadji's Maimouna: La petite fille noire is very fatalistic. All of the characters in it, with the miraculous exception of Rihanna's husband, Bounama, are trapped in an irredeemable situation. Most of them do not even grow and change as

characters. They are static in moods, outlook, beliefs, and behaviour. When they change it is for the worse as is the case with Maimouna who remains throughout childlike in character. In this manner the author seems to be stressing a line which does not envisage any possibilities for change. Sadji in this novel, similiar to Mohamed in Kiu, believes in predestination, and from the very beginning he lays blame on it saying that man's destiny resides in, and is determined by, the mercy of nature and spirits:

> L'hivernage arriva avec sa brusquerie habituelle. Le premier orage gr_onda comme une céleste menace: un géant caché qui intimide de petits avortons. Puis, il s'en alla, fier de n'entendre pas de replique. (p. 15)

Therefore, much of the symbolism which Sadji uses in this novel emphasizes that the whole life of man is controlled by elements beyond his control. This is certainly the case with the sadness and darkness of the physical objects surrounding Daro which, when added to the symbolic seasons, tell of the destiny of Daro's family -- especially of Maimouna, as her mother emphasizes the fact that "Les changements de saison etaient marques presque toujours par des deuils ou de calamites."

The prostitute in this novel, and indeed, all people are caught irredeemably by their own destiny. Like in Maillu's Unfit For Human Consumption and Mohamed's Kiu, as shall be seen later, in this novel the author would like us to blame Maimouna for her behaviour. This is a contradiction in terms as Sadji fails to give us a clear line of demarcation between destiny and Maimouna's "foolishness" in her plight. Added to this is the author's blame on the intrusion of Western culture into

the African way of life. He however does not develop his argument, so that in the end it turns out to be an idealization of everything African and a cursing of everything European. His valid cry against the breakup of the family unit turns into a quiet moan as he fails to analyse what the root causes of such break-up are. His Senghorian-negritudist viewpoint makes him blind to the facts of capitalism and urbanization and to the class nature of events and relations between people. In this way he fails to analyse correctly the nature of the crisis of "prostitutes" like Maimouna; instead he blames and even punishes them.

Alec Bessey's "Introduction"[9] to the novel is the most meaningful article onSadji's novel to date. It starts by giving historical and cultural background of the novel in francophone West Africa. Bessey stresses the importance of the place of oral literature -- especially the "folktale" -- in this background. With this in mind, he examines the novel's characterisation and themes. He shows how Sadji has interwoven the traditional oral tale forms and the modern novel form. In doing this, however, Alec Bessey idealizes Sadji's novel too much, and his piece turns out to be too apologetic. He argues that since unconvincing, moralising, crude division between right and wrong, stories with dubious plots and even "lack of characterisation," are typical of "folklore literature," we should not blame their presence in Sadji's novel. However, I think, in utilizing the above elements, the author has not managed to blend them well into the novel form and the result has been a very crude mish mash of the real and the unreal which has in turn resulted in Sadji's unsatisfactory treatment of the otherwise very

important themes.

Sadji in Maïmouna: La petite fille noire, has dealt with a rather complicated and intricate theme which he never really managed to analyze [illegible] and treat sufficiently and correctly from its social, political, and economic perspectives; the theme of the conflict between town and country which is inevitably tied to the fact of capitalist exploitation of one class of people by another is explored without serious reference to this social base. Even the author's examination of the cosmologies of the two conflicting cultures has mostly ended up in confusion. The result of all of the above has been a rather narrow, moralistic treatment which, ultimately, has produced a work of art lacking in depth.[10]

The next work for our discussion is by an East African author, David G. Maillu. But before I begin analysing it, it is necessary to make a few remarks and observations concerning a tide of writing similar to Maillu's which had gripped the East African literary scene in the early and mid-seventies. This kind of writing has had many names given to it, such as "pop pulp," "popular literature," "junk writing," "dirty books," "literary sexploitation" and many others.

Among the numerous texts in this trend, the most "popular" and "prominent" are Charles Mangua's potboilers Son of Woman (1971), and A Tail in the Mouth (1972); David G. Maillu's Unfit For Human Consumption (1973), My Dear Bottle (1973), After 4:30 (1973), and Troubles (1974); John Kibwana's Utisi (1974), Maina Allan's One by One (1975); Muli Mutiso's Sugar Babies (1975); Omunjako Nakibimbiri's The Sobbing Sounds (1975); Bingu Matata's Love for Sale (1975) and Free Love (1975);Paul N. Njue's My Lovely Mother (1976); Andrew M. Mwiwawi's The Act (1976);

and the Swahili stories and novelettes of crime and passion published by Longman Kenya between 1968 and 1972 under a series title of Hadithi za Kusisimua ("Titillating Stories") such as Omolo's Mtaka Yote Hukosa Yote (Lit. "He who Wants All Loses All") (1968), Mwerevu Hajinyoi (1971) (Lit. "A Clever Man Does not Shave Himself"), and Uhalifu Haulipi (1971) (Lit. "Crime Does not Pay"); and J.M. Simbamwene's Mwisho wa Mapenzi (1971) (Lit. "End of Love") and Kwa Sababu ya Pesa (1972) (Lit. "Because of Money").[11]

Several general and basic remarks can be made concerning all of the above works of literature; remarks which will help us put our central text of analysis in its proper perspective. In all of the texts, as is the case with most of the Onitsha Market literature,[12] we see characters who live in the cities and whose lives are surrounded by a state of unease bobbing up and down in the suffocating social setting and circumstances. A cross section of the above "potboilers" will show characters in them confronted with the amorphous urban realities which turn most of them into prostitutes. These characters are caught in the tangles of city values, ideals and dreams which swallow them into confusion and sometimes despair. Their world is shown to be one gigantic arena of transient pleasures of the flesh -- a playground filled to the brim with corruption, unquenchable thirst for "love" and money, violence, death, and lack of security.

Yet, in all of the above works the analysis of the prostitute's position and of other people of her social class in relation to the prevailing socio-politico-economic conditions has been, to say the least, very minimal and at times totally misleading and even lacking. In most of the above works, the treatment of the characters has lacked depth.

For example, in most of Maillu's works and most of the works published by Maillu's own publishing firm, Comb Books, some of which had "a touch by David G. Maillu";[13] and in Charles Mangua's Son of Woman and A Tail in the Mouth, it is easy to notice a form of "irreverent tone and great preoccupation with sex and outrageous roguishness"[14] -- to borrow Bernth Lindfor's words. In Son of Woman, for example, one notices almost immediately, the imported image of the American "tough guy," -- an open influence and xerox copying of the Western films and literature written hurriedly just to sell.

Son of Woman is a sensual, picaresque story about a prostitute's son who had to try to live by cunningly cheating his friends and habitually seducing prostitutes. Peter Nazareth in his Literature and Society in Modern Africa[15] has termed the novel "a work of erotic realism" while Bernth Lindfors has said it belongs "in the 'ha-ha' school of soft pornography."[16]

All in all, the fact still remains that most of the books in this trend appear to have been published not for any social significance and message but just for money. To quote Lindfors again:

> [All these books] appear to have been published solely to capitalize on the trend towards sexually explicit popular (sic) literature. These books pander to the prurient interests of their readers, offering little more than an amusing succession of unusual orgasms. This is literary prostitution of the worst sort.[17]

The above remarks apply squarely to all of David G. Maillu's works. With the remarks in mind, I shall now proceed to look in depth at one of Maillu's novelettes.

David Maillu, the patron of East African pulp literature, has so far, written more than seven works, all of which deal mainly with char-

acters from offices in Nairobi: secretaries and their bureaucratic bourgeois bosses, clerks, sweepers, and others. Maillu's works seem to aim mainly at titillating the reader's glands by concentrating on the sexual lives of his characters, so much that most of the time the concentration reaches nauseating dimensions. Thus, all of his characters are involved in sexual drives whose outlets in their encounters with each other are given in explicit, pointless details.

Yet, in spite of this pointlessness in Maillu's works, they attracted numerous readers in East Africa to the extent of becoming best sellers. Maillu became one of the dominating authors in the literary scene in East Africa in the mid-seventies so that his self-published mini-novels and poetic booklets sold so well they enabled him to establish his own publishing firm, Comb Books. In his article called "A Basic Anatomy of East African Literature," Bernth Lindfors quotes Maillu on the "reasons" for the firm's "success":

> People say that I hit the nail on the head, whatever that means. People say that they see themselves when they are reading the books; they can identify with situations and characters. Basically I think there are three things that tend to make the books popular. Humour is one, frankness may be another, and some people say the books contain wisdom, but I don't know what kind of wisdom that is.[18]

What Maillu means by "frankness" is none other than the sickening bedroom scenes in his novelettes; and, as Lindfors has commented:

> In describing the zesty bedroom gymnastics of Nairobi's bureaucrats, Maillu even outstripped Mangua in sheer volume of salacious detail. Such frankness was part of his formula for publishing success.[19]

Yet, in spite of their apparent commercial success, the popularity of

Maillu's books, as is the case with all others of their type, taken individually, has been short-lived. This is a further indication that instead of analysing the social situations in a scientific manner, the works are so shallow that the reading public discovered soon that in spite of the exciting passages in them they lacked depth and constructive ideas.

In Maillu's Unfit For Human Consumption, as is the case with his other works, we find a sense of organic interrelatedness to his precedessor -- Charles Mangua. In Unfit For Human Consumption there are men who have driving passions for women while the women characters are mostly passionate, lustful animals -- prostitutes -- who sell their bodies, sometimes not really for money and promotions in work but to attempt to satisfy their insatiable sexual appetites. This kind of portrayal is clearly brought out in Maina Allan's One By One in which a girl is shown to be a ready-made source of sexual pleasure which accepts any kind of man -- a sensuous animal with almost no reasoning capacity.

The plot of Unfit For Human Consumption is simple and straight forward. Kinama, a civil servant in the republic of Kenya, gets his two months' salary and decides to drink for a while with his friends in a bar. In the bar, Kinama makes friends with a prostitute called Lily. The two of them leave the bar later on and stagger drunkenly into a room upstairs where they spend the night. Later on while Kinama is fast asleep, Lily steals all of his money, leaving him with only six shillings, and she disappears. The next morning, Kinama, still half drunk, tries in vain to look for Lily. In frustration he drinks some more beer, gets drunk, goes to his office while dead drunk, and lies to his boss

saying that one of his twin babies has died and that is why he had to drink to kill his nerves. Meanwhile, by remarkable coincidence, his wife, Dorcas, who had come to Nairobi two days previously from their village looking for him, bursts into the office and a verbal fight ensues between the couple. The wife complains that the husband doesn't care about her and the children, doesn't send them any money while he goes around the city spending all of his salary on prostitutes. The fight ends with a comical chase of the husband, Kinama, by his co-workers, his wife, and the police. Finally, when matters seem to have cooled down Kinama decides that life is "as false as a walking shadow," and he commits suicide.

In short, that is what happens in Unfit For Human Consumption. From the very beginning of the story, the author draws his readers towards fixing their attention on the bodies of women. While Kinama is in the bank all his mind and his eyes are on women. We are even told that "there was a smell of sex especially from some of the women who had come to the bank hurrying through the hot morning" (p. 5). As he continues looking at them, various names escape his mind: "sexy bird," "delicious dish," "human butterfly" and the like. All these, we are made to understand, are for sale. As Kinama gets his money he comments: "Now I've become a man again, where's she?" and he searches around for a fat girl he had seen and craved for earlier on. With money in his pockets, Kinama feels he can get any woman in Nairobi. In other words, all women have been turned into prostitutes in this city so that the slightest bulge of a man's pocket is an assurance of a bout in bed with any of them. It's this kind of nexus which keeps men and women "friends,"

as is seen in the affair between Kinama's friend, Maruka and his "girl-friend" Anita. He can keep her as long as he still has a lot of money to give to her. Even when one evening Kinama is with Anita waiting for Maruka, Kinama knows immediately how easy it is to get her, for "he had calculated her morals and knew that being what she was, a kind of prostitute in this case, she would not resist a good deal of bribe" (p. 17).

The prostitutes in Unfit For Human Consumption are always kept at the background and are being commented upon by either the narrator or the other characters. Maillu has taken the fact of prostitutes and prostitution for granted and he, thus, never indicates any possibilities for change in the prostitutes' lives. Anita, Lily, Maggy and others of their type in Unfit For Human Consumption are shown to be passive people who have decided to make the best of their situations. They view life in a very pessimistic way and they have decided to practice the law of the jungle by grabbing some cash from drunks like Kinama and so on.

Typical of all bourgeois commercial literature, what matters in Maillu's Unfit for Human Consumption is not an analysis of the social circumstances in relation to the environment which produces them. Rather, it is to take advantage of the circumstances and select the most titillating ones which when put on paper will manage to dull the mind while exciting the body.[20]

It does not seem to matter very much to Maillu when Lily, Maggy, Anita and others are forced to sell their bodies to those who possess cash power. In fact Kinama's attitude towards them which, I am convinced, represents the author's, is to make fun of them. The whole outlook of

the story makes it seem as if the author is always standing at the back of the reader urging him to laugh at "the bitches." Maillu's works do not give any constructive thoughts on the crisis of the prostitute. His prostitutes, unlike the prostitute in Oculi's Prostitute,[21] are base persons who are to be treated as "social misfits" who cause troubles such as marriage breakups and suicides. The author, therefore, seems to be laying all the blame on the prostitutes and at the same time using their bodies to make his books sell. In this way the author has become a pimp who prostitutes his characters for money.

In his article, "A Basic Anatomy of East African Literature,"[22] Bernth Lindfors makes some hilarious and yet very meaningful conclusions concerning the positions of various authors in East Africa who write in English which I think are worth mentioning as a way of concluding my discussion of Maillu's Unfit For Human Consumption.

Starting his article by quoting Ngugi wa Thiongo's statement that the African novelist's work is often "an attempt to come to terms with the 'thing that has been,' a struggle as it were, to sensitively register his encounter with history, his people's history," he shows how Ngugi, like Chinua Achebe, has used his fiction to rewrite African history from an African perspective. Showing how Ngugi wa Thiongo as a writer has been "a nationalist historian and a chronicler with a patriotic message,"[23] Lindfors concludes that Ngugi writes in order to educate and raise the political consciousness of his people, and therefore his position in the East African literary anatomy is the head. While Okot p'Bitek's position is the heart and lungs, Taban Lo Liyong's is skeletal and circulatory systems, Charles Mangua's is the lower viscera, and lowest of them

all is David Maillu's which is the groin.

From a reading of Unfit For Human Consumption, as is with all of Maillu's works, it is easy to conclude, as has Charles R. Larson of Meja Mwangi's Going Down River Road and Grace Ogot's The Other Woman, that:

> Kenyan society is composed entirely of young bar girls, urban thugs, or youths (often unemployed) who, when they are not violent, spend their time supporting these girls, plus an occasional older (and therefore more corrupt) politician.[24]

Such depiction is, of course, very misleading. Although Maillu in Unfit for Human Consumption deals with the present predicament of an environment where incessant rapid change characterizes the city setting, his treatment, as has been seen, negates the social class reality around the exploited people such as prostitutes, who belong to the lowest level of the social ladder.

Following suit in this trend of writing is our next author, Mohamed S. Mohamed -- one of the leading East African Swahili novelists today. Born and brought up in the Isles in Tanzania, Mohamed was able to see in part, the influence of feudalism and its implications in the daily lives of the poor people. As such, the setting of most of his writings, as is indeed the case with most novels from that part of Tanzania is in the feudalistic Isles.

Mohamed began his writing career by submitting some short stories for the Swahili programmes on the B.B.C., London. But it was not until the publication of his first novel, Kiu (Lit. "Thirst") that he won recognition as a potential Swahili novelist. His second novel, Nyota ya

Rehema[25] (Lit. "Rehema's Star" or "Rehema's Luck") brought him even much more fame because of its better form and ideological clarity. His short stories, including some of the B.B.C. ones, have just been published recently under the collective title of Kicheko cha Ushindi (Lit. "The Laughter of Victory").[26]

Although it would be very interesting to analyse how the basic ideological weaknesses in Kiu have been improved upon tremendously in Mohamed's other two works, this task is not within the limits of the present chapter. Here I will just concentrate on Kiu because it falls under the category of negative examples of African authors' use of the prostitute in their works to distort realities in their societies -- a category which forms the core of the discussion in this chapter.

Kiu is a story of an underprivileged and exploited girl, Bahati, who, in order to survive the odds of the feudal times has to prostitute her body. The story centers around the word "kiu" ("thirst"), thus, its title. Mzee Mwinyi (slang for "feudal"), a rich feudal lord in Unguja, Tanzania, has a strong thirst for the love of the beautiful Bahati. Since he knows that Bahati is from a very poor family, he decides to use his money as his sole weapon to win the girl. Meanwhile, Idi, Mzee Mwinyi's servant, has great thirst for his lord's money, and he decides to quench it by using Bahati. He cheats Bahati by falsely professing love for her, and since Bahati is already deeply in love with him, Idi's plans work out. Bahati has thirst both for Idi's love and, of course, for money. Idi convinces Bahati to go and offer her body to Mzee Mwinyi and ask for a large sum of money. Her poverty and her love for Idi drive Bahati to the humiliation of selling her body to a tired,

sickly old man, Mzee Mwinyi, only to discover later on that she has been cheated by Idi who after using the money for himself, abandons her. To quote the back cover of the novel:

> [After the discovery] Bahati ... like a trapped bird, struggles hard to free herself but only ends in destruction.

In Bahati, therefore, we see a woman whose poor family makes her realize that if she is not to remain on the dung-hill she must marry someone with resources. That someone happens to be Idi, for in him she thinks she will find love and also money. There is, therefore, a recurrent theme of money and cash relations between people in Kiu. Bahati is obsessed with the twin "thirsts" of love and money, so much that finally they fuse together and destroy her.

Kiu has been able to penetrate into the characters and their surroundings through a very dense style of narrative. This narrative style is accomplished by a colourful, sophisticated, almost exotic use of language so that there is constant utilization of complex imagery and symbolism. One of the most memorable incidents which symbolizes various facts of the realities around Bahati's miserable life is on page 94. When Bahati has finally discovered that Idi and their "marriage" were just for material gains on the side of Idi, she decides, for no apparent reason, to visit a pond of water nearby. This is the description of her visit:

> She saw the pond which she had been looking for, and she went near it. Stooping, she looked into the pond, an act which somehow made her start forgetting all that had been bothering her ...

> It wasn't a big pond really - a tall man could easily jump across it. Its sides were made in such a way that the pond looked like a bowl of water, as if someone had specifically created that bowl to catch the eye's admiration. It was full to the brim; but soon Bahati saw that there was a crack on one side through which water was leaking. Quickly, she used her hand to cover the crack with mud. She stooped more and fixed her eyes on the covered crack. (P. 94)

At a glance, the above might seem to be just another simple descriptive paragraph. However, a closer reading shows that the visit to the pond is a direct replica of Bahati's state of mind and her life in general. She has discovered that she has been used by Idi, that she has prostituted herself for the money which has all gone to Idi's pocket. There is a crack in her whole life, a hole through which her very existence is being drained. She is desperately trying to mend her life, but all in vain since she is using only mud which will soak through and let the water flow out again.

The author gives us some more clues as he goes on with his description of the symbolic visit to the pond:

> In that bowl there was clean water, and Bahati saw three small fishes which were busy running away from the shadow of that monster which was gazing at them then. After Bahati had stayed motionless for some time the fish thought of her as their friend and so started playing in the pond at ease. Bahati looked at them and liked them, and was suddenly caught by the urge to catch one of them and feel how it would slide away from her fingers. She dipped her hand into the pond, and the creatures in there ran away in fright - they had to protect their lives from that monster. Bahati felt kind towards them, and she knew that she had been cruel to them. She withdrew her hand.
>
> Now her kind heart called to her to give those creatures some help. She saw them as prisoners who had met with similar cruel circumstances like those of some other creatures in the world. ... She must help

> them; she must remove them from that cruel prison, she must! She stood up and started kicking the walls of the pond. She kicked and kicked and kicked until even her leg began hurting. And then, without turning to look at the destruction of her kicks, she left ... (pp. 94-95).

Here, Bahati has reflected on her life and on the lives of all people of her type -- all the poor people. While she has shown so much concern about the way out of the situation, the final act of kicking the edges of the pond ties in with the ultimate pessimistic view which the author uses as the heartbeat of Kiu. This pessimistic world view is given in the narrator's own words when he "reasons" about thirst, its nature and its ultimate end:

> Thirst can not be quenched; and its eternal existence in every part of man's being makes him unable to notice how days pass by. The stomach gets full, then empty, and full again. The hands desire to touch, untouch, and touch again; so is the same with the eyes, ears, legs, and everything. Man is continually on the quest of trying to quench his unquenchable thirst, and days keep on passing by. (p. 108)

According to Kiu, therefore, man was created with the different types of thirst in him and he will either die with or because of the thirst. By trying to quench the thirst, according to the novel, man ends by fanning the fire which finally will destroy him. In other words, the author's thesis is that there is no need to struggle. People such as Bahati who are turned into prostitutes by the system, are told in Kiu that they should accept their fate, and that if they try any kind of grappling they will just end up destroying themselves.

Kiu is a good example of a work of literature which has failed to

show how all life and all relations between people are determined by the socio-politico-economic conditions prevailing in society. Its author has neglected the fact that all types of thirst are determined by such conditions in society. He has overlooked the simple truth of the fact that Bahati, her mother, even Idi -- all have thirst whose source is in the production relations in a class society which enriches a few hands and impoverishes the majority of people. The novel has overlooked the social class aspects of society and thus it has falsely portrayed life in the Isles as a very pessimistic, confusing and disillusioning experience in which the poor people like Bahati are warned not to struggle at all. While it is, indeed, true that during feudalistic times the majority of people are forced to prostitute themselves for their survival, it is not correct to state that there is no future in such peoples' "thirsts" for their freedom from the exploitative bondage to the feudalistic system. On the other hand, instead of distorting the reality of the struggle of the poor people in such a system, the author should have realized, as he did in his second novel, that history is moving forward and that it is not true that all "thirsts" lead to self destruction. The "thirst" of the poor people like Bahati, when correctly guided, can, and indeed has been able to lead to their victory, prosperity and economic self determination. In fact this historic truth was illustrated even in the author's own home land when the poor people in the Islands finally got together and fought and crushed the feudalistic government of the Sultan in 1964.

Since Mohamed S. Mohamed in <u>Kiu</u> has indirectly and in a subtle manner buried the struggle of the poor people like prostitutes in rid-

icule and pessimism, while disregarding the social class aspects of their lives, he has, therefore, like Abdoulaye Sadji and David G. Maillu, misused the prostitute in his work to distort realities in his society.

The examination of the three major texts: Abdoulaye Sadji's Maimouna, David G. Maillu's Unfit For Human Consumption, and Mohamed S. Mohamed's Kiu has enabled us to make one general conclusion among others. According to these authors, the prostitute and her fellow sufferers are caught irredeemably in their plight, and the best they can do is to either suffer without bitterness, and snatch whatever they can from their predicament as is the case with Lily, Maggy and Anita in Maillu's work, or give in to their fate which is, in any case, shown to be inevitable, as has been seen in Mohamed's and Sadji's novels.

In examining the three novels I have, of necessity, looked into the way the authors have viewed the course of history, the changes in the modes of production and exchange, the consequent division of society into social classes, and the inevitable struggles of these classes against one another on all planes of life: social, political, and economic. These authors' lack of clear understanding of the above phenomena and sometimes an outright neglect of them has invariably led to lack of depth and of scientific analysis of the forces operating in the process of societal motion. This has, in turn, turned their treatment of the prostitute into a way of distorting and mystifying reality.

NOTES

[1] See The Journal of Commonwealth Literature, Vol. VIII, No. 2, (1973), p. 15.

[2] (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1972).

[3] (Paris: Presence Africaine, 1958, and London: Sydenham Books, 1972).

[4] (Nairobi: Comb Books, 1973).

[5] (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1974).

[6] This might be part of Sadji's source of confusion due to his adherence to the Senghorian version of Negritude -- a shallow and narrow-minded ideology based on the misinterpretation of the word 'culture' which takes into account only such things as drums and dances and claims them to be the sole heartbeat of the African world. This school of "thought" and its influences partly manifest in Sadji's blind praise of "traditional" Africa.

[7] Most of this biographical information is from two sources: Donald E. Herdeck, African Authors: A Companion to Black African Writing 1300-1973 (Washington: Black Orpheus, 1973), pp. 378-79; and Alec Bessey's "Introduction" to Maimouna (London: Sydenham Books, 1972), pp. 1-28.

[8] Ibid., p. 378.

[9] Op. cit., pp. 1-28.

[10] For the interested reader, the following articles could make fruitful further readings on Abdoulaye Sadji's works: L. Diakhate, "Abdoulaye Sadji et le roman de negre nouveau," Condition humaine (1955), pp. 96-112; "Abdoulaye Sadji est mort," Presence Africaine XXXIX (1961), n.p.; A.C. Brench, Writings in French from Senegal to Cameroon (London: Oxford-Three Crowns, 1967.)

[11] For an interesting and detailed account on the Hadithi za Kusisimua series see Kavugha Douglas Kavugha and Carolyn A. Parker, "Hadithi za Kusisimua: Crime and Passion in Swahili Literature," paper given at the 1977 African Studies Association Meeting, Available in African Studies Association Archives 1977 (Waltham, Massachusetts: Brandeis University, A.S.A., 1978). This paper, although quite informative, has one basic weakness in that it fails to see how the moralistic outlook of the stories in these series has made them fail to examine various issues correctly and in depth. The paper, therefore, does not realize the fact that it is precisely because of the lack of scientific analysis of the issues and because of the mysticism contained

in the stories, that the powers-that-be tried to "popularize" the series among the masses. The people, however, rejected the stories when they realized that they never really offered any constructive ideas to help them out of their poverty-stricken lives.

I have dealt with the Hadithi za Kusisimua series -- effectively, I think -- in my paper "Ng'ombe Kivundika Guu ..." Preliminary Remarks on the Proverb Story in Written Swahili Literature," presented at the African Literature Association Annual Meeting, Indiana University, March, 1979; available in African Literature Association Archives 1979 (ALA Publications Office: University of Alberta, Department of Comparative Literature, 1979).

[12] It is interesting to note the similarities in titles in the Hadithi za Kusismua series and the Onitsha Market Literary pamphlets. In the latter we have such titles like Never Trust All that Love You, Money Hard to Get But Easy to Spend, Beware of Harlots and Many Friends, and many other moralistic titles. In many of these pamphlets whenever prostitutes appear thay are shown to be bad people who should be cast aside by the society, and, like Maillu's booklets and others of their type, the warning against the prostitutes is clear: "Beware of Harlots ..."

For a detailed study of the literature see, Emanuel Obiechina, An African Popular Literature: A Study of Onitsha Market Pamphlets (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973); and also Ime Ikideh, "The Character of Popular Fiction in Ghana," Perspectives on African Literature (New York: Africana Publishing Corporation, 1971), pp. 106-116.

[13] For example, see Maina Allan's One by One which was published "with a touch by David G. Maillu," or Jacinta Mote's The Flesh (1975) -- an account of confessions of a prostitute -- which has on its cover, the words "Produced by David G. Maillu."

[14] See Bernth Lindfors' "A Basic Anatomy of East African Literature," Paper presented at the African Literature Association Meetings, Indiana University, March 1979, p. 9). (Available from A.L.A. Archives, Department of Comparative Literature, University of Alberta). The title of this paper is, however, very misleading, for, if at all it were to suit the content it should have been "A Basic Anatomy of East African Literature Written in English," because any anatomy of East African Literature which overlooks Swahili literature, in the final analysis lacks all the major anatomical ingredients of the body.

[15] (Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau, 1972), p. 185.

[16] Op. cit., p. 4.

[17] Ibid., p. 9.

[18] Ibid., p. 6.

[19] Ibid., p. 6.

[20] DRITA -- Organ of the Writers and Artists League of Albania -- drew very interesting conclusions in an extremely stimulating article, "The Bourgeois Detective Novel Today," Albania Today 6/37 (1977), pp. 63-64, most of which applies squarely to Maillu's type of writing. Among other things, the article had this to say:

> In their furious competition to attract buyers, the writers of the bourgeois commercial literature are constantly searching for more new gimmicks. In their so-called works, which in general amount only to nauseating hotch-potch, these so-called writers continue the most banal combinations in order to create among their readers the illusion that, after all, they are serving up something new.

[21] (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1968). This book will be examined in depth in the coming chapters.

[22] Op. cit.

[23] Ibid., pp. 1-2.

[24] Charles R. Larson, Untitled review article on African Literature, World Literature Today 51/4 (1977, p. 565).

[25] (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1976).

[26] (Nairobi: Shungwaya Publishers, 1978).

CHAPTER TWO

THE PROSTITUTE AND THE PROTEST TRADITION

The protest tradition is common and popular among African literary traditions.[1] Its history in written literature goes way back to the colonial times when authors and composers produced literary works directed against the exploiting colonial regimes. In colonial situations it has taken the form of direct political revolt so that in South Africa, for example, writers such as Dennis Brutus, Peter Abrahams, Nadime Gordimer, Athol Fugard, Arthur Nortje, Alfred Hutchinson, Ezekiel Mphaulele, Richard Rive, Alex la Guma, Lewis Nkosi, Phyllis Altman, Alan Paton, and many others have produced works bitterly opposed to Apartheid and exploitation of the masses of South African people; and in the former Portuguese colonies of Angola, Mozambique, and Guiné, poems of resistance against colonialism and imperialism in those countries and Africa in general, have come forth from such dynamic poets like Agostinho Neto, Noemia de Sousa, Antonio Jacinto, Jose Craveirinha, Jorge Rebelo, Helder Neto, Marcelino dos Santos, and many others.[2] Among many other writers from elsewhere in Africa who have taken anti-colonial themes as their major pre-occupation in some of their works are Shaaban Robert, Ebrahim N. Hussein, Shafi Adam Shafi, J.K. Kiimbila and Mohamed Said Ahmed from Tanzania; Ngugi wa Thiong'o and the famous 19th century Mwambao poet, Muyaka bin Haji from Mombasa, Kenya; Chinua Achebe from Nigeria, Ayi Kwei Armah from Ghana, and Sembene Ousmane from Senegal.

The tradition has taken too the form of the politics of Negritude to protest against foreign cultural domination and to re-assert -- in

varying degrees of success from one author to another -- the cultural values of the African world. In this group prominent founders and disciples are Aime Cesaire, Leon Damas, David Diop, Frantz Fanon, Leopold Sedar Senghor, Tchicaya U'Tamsi, and others.

Political satires have featured prominently too in the protest tradition. These are in works such as those of Wole Soyinka, Shaaban Robert, Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, T.M. Aluko, Mongo Beti, Ferdinand Oyono, G. Tilumanya and others.

Other forms of the tradition have appeared in those literary works which have dealt with the questions of integration, as in some works by Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Ama Ata Aidoo, and Cuthbert Omari, of assimilation as mostly in Camara Laye's novels, and of the generation gap as seen in some works by Ama Ata Aidoo and Ebrahim Hussein for example. All of the above examples of the protest tradition have directed anger against either the colonial or neo-colonial forces which have continued to oppress and exploit the masses of the African peoples. As Louis James has stated correctly:

> In situations as explosive as that of Africa today there can be no creative literature that is not in some way political, in some way protest. Even the writer who opts out of the social struggles of his country and tries to create a private world of art is saying something controversial about the responsibility of the artist to society.[3]

Most of the above authors of the protest tradition have, at one time or another, utilized the character of the prostitute in their literary works to speak out against social, political and economic injustices pertaining in their various societies. Since the prostitute

has invariably featured in most works, it becomes an impossible task to examine her all-round role in all the works where she appears. Let me, therefore, take a short, fairly representative list of works and examine such role in Mongo Beti's Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba, Okello Oculi's Prostitute, Okot p'Bitek's Song of Malaya, and W.E. Mkufya's Wicked Walk.

In Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba, Mongo Beti has dealt with various themes among which anti-clericalism and colonial oppression and exploitation dominate. Among critics who have examined the work such as Dorothy S. Blair,[4] Kwabena Britwum,[5] Thomas Cassirer,[6] Fernando Lambert,[7] Thomas Melone,[8] Jeannette Macaulay,[9] Abioseh Mike Porter,[10] Robert P. Smith Jr.,[11] and William Umezimwa,[12] the question of prostitutes and pseudo-prostitution in Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba has either just been mentioned in passing or neglected completely. I am going to show how the question plays a very central role whether one is examining the novel's tragi-comedy, irony and humour, paradox, theme of love, or even idea of assimilation.

Beti approaches the whole tradition of protest in a very skeptical way. His examination is extremely hilarious and humorous, yet very biting and violent against clericalism and colonialism which, he shows through the course of the novel, are ultimately one and the same.

Father Drummond, having discovered that his following has thinned out considerably, asks ignorantly:

> Why do you think everybody has stopped coming to Church? Do you think I have done anything wrong in the last twenty years? (p. 29)[13]

The answer to this question comes from the cook Zachariah,

> ... you began talking to them of God, of the soul, of eternal life, and so forth. Do you really suppose they didn't know those things already, long before you came? So of course, they decided that you were hiding something. Later, they saw that if they had money they could get plenty of things for themselves -- gramophones and cars, and perhaps even aeroplanes one day. Well, then! They are turning from religion and running elsewhere, after money, no less. That's the truth of it, Father. As for the rest, it's all make-believe. ..." (p. 30)

Zachariah's society has been turned into a money-oriented society so that people hurry towards more and more money instead of the empty mission which, in fact, takes their money away.

However, the most bitter answer comes from the revelation concerning what has been taking place in the sixa. While the villagers around the father still live in a considerably stable village society governed concretely by the African social traditions, it turns out to be a bitter irony that an outsider who comes with the aim of "civilizing" the "pagan" black man is, in fact, the source of disease and dirt. The turning of the sixa into a brothel merely sixty yards from the"Reverend's" house of residence, tells of the way the "civilizing" white man who comes to Africa only prostitutes the African way of life; he becomes the pimp who is being led by his ignorant, abstract, distorted and primitivist view of an African as a pure child of nature who does not possess any cultural identity. The father spends more than twenty years in Africa with a perverted ignorant mind so that he discovers, too late, that his mission has turned into a hot bed of sexual pleasure, prostitution and disease. The sixa is supposed to be a "home" for young

women preparing to become "good Christian wives." Here they are supposed to sweat and toil manually for the mission for a good number of months while supposedly being taught "the rightful ways of Christ." This, of course, puts the church at par with the colonial administration in terms of labour exploitation. And, furthermore, as Thomas Cassirer has put it:

> In fact the sixa is revealed to be spreading not so much Christian morals as venereal disease throughout the region. Faced with this horrendous proof that he has unknowingly served as an agent for the very corruption from which he tried to protect [sic] the Africans, Father Drummond returns to Europe in despair.[14]

It is this attitude of "protecting the Africans" which shows a clear naivete of the "Reverend" Father and his final despair indicates his downfall and the victory of African resistance to an alien European way of life. Although critics such as Thomas Cassirer[15] have spoken of Beti's treatment of the missionaries as men of "ideals and ideas" and even as "revolutionaries," it becomes clear in Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba that they are not only naive, exploiting, tax collectors and anti-revolutionaries, but also they are the epitomes of prostitution and venereal disease. Father Drummond intentionally lets the infected sixa girls go back to their homes uncured, the doctor's report notwithstanding! This is the final note of his wrongheadedness and anti-people attitude. But it does not come as a surprise because, as a representative of a pimping institution he is not expected to worry about the venereal disease and its spread among the people.

The pseudo-prostitution in Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba is double-edged. The edge of the sixa women whose freedom has been prostituted and who

are forced into prostitution to avoid the hard labour imposed on them by the mission only hints at a larger societal prostitution. The "Reverend" father and his mission in collaboration with the colonial administration and the Greek merchants, of course, manage to prostitute the values of African way of life. They turn into the knife which slashes at the oneness which had held the African people together. They separate man and man, man and himself, wife and husband, even a son with his parents as in the case of Denis:

> This morning I could stand it no longer. Before it was daylight I fled from home, wearing all my best clothes, as I did every Sunday in the old days .... I am remembering the advice which Anatole gave me one evening! To go to the town and get a small boy's job with one of the Greek merchants. (pp. 217-219)

The switch-over from Father Drummond to the Greek merchant is just a final indication of the similarities between the missions of Father Drummond, the colonial administration and the Greek merchants. Here we witness the fusing together of the spiritual jurisdiction of Father Drummond, the authoritative and administrative powers of Vidal, and the commercial empire of the Greek merchants. Among them there is one common denominator: economic gains. Their missions have prostituted relations between people so that cash nexus between man and man has become a way of life. Even Denis does not work for the Father merely as "a spiritual son" as Thomas Cassirer[16] would have us believe. Even his "love" and attachment to the Father does not start or end at the simple level of mere love as Mike A. Porter's article, "The Child Narrator and the Theme of Love in Mongo Beti's Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba"[17] seems to

suggest. Denis works for and "loves" Father Drummond because of the material gains he gets; and if and when he can not get the gains from the "Reverend" Father he might as well get such gains from the Greek merchants. The African people, therefore, do not perceive Father's mission as an apostolic, spiritual institution. Far from it. Rather they see it from its own practical examples, as one of the perspectives of the prostituted material force it stands for. That is why even Denis admits this fact when he stresses on material needs of the mission:

> After all, don't all unmarried Christian girls bring their babies for baptism, paying a special fee fixed by the Father himself? Isn't that an extra source of money for the mission coffers? And we need so many things - an organ for the new church, a tractor for ploughing our fields, a generator for electric light, a motor car, and so forth. (p. 9)

So, what conclusions can we draw from our discussion of Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba? The pseudo-prostitution in this novel, with all its rotten outcome which turns the mission into a whorehouse, is an example of just one kind of Beti's use of irony, so that the so-called spirituality of missionary work is shown to be a mask for the crassest material aims. The actions of the sixa girls of trading their flesh to escape hard labour and sexual starvation after being forcibly separated from their fiancés parallels Father Drummond's action of trading the "spiritual" aspect of his work with material gains so that he gives so much importance to the church rate. Money, therefore, becomes the "open sesame"[18] of religious activities. Even the greatest poverty can not change the Father's demand for money. We therefore get two types of prostitutes in Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba: the sixa girls on the one hand,

who are just forced by circumstances to turn into prostitutes, and the church/father on the other hand who prostitutes the "word of God" for material benefits. The Father goes to the extent of using blackmail to squeeze a few coins from a dying man crushed by a tree instead of helping him.

The Father and the Church in this novel and their essence of decadence and rottenness as manifested on the Church compound stresses the denunciation and protest nature of the novel. In them as in many other aspects of the novel, is expressed the ultimate incompatibility existing between the universe of the values and beliefs of a colonized people and an alien religion and rules which serve a system whose main aim is to condemn that universe.

The function of the writer in Africa has been and continues to be that of defining and examining the experience of colonialism as in the case of Mongo Beti's Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba, and neo-colonialism as is witnessed in a great bulk of literary works in Africa. He, the writer, has been trying to give meaning to whatever changes that have taken place in his society; and he has continually attempted to interrelate those changes with the socio-politico-economic needs of the masses of people in his society. As Edward Hower has stated:

> It is life at this everyday level ... that tests the validity of the political, ideological life of [the writer's] nation. Like his characters, the writer has serious questions about whether the egalitarian ideals set forth at Independence have been implemented by the leaders, and, more important, about whether many of the goals of nation-building-expansion of industry and higher education - have served the needs of the people of expressing [and getting] what is [rightfully] theirs. 19

The publication of Okello Oculi's Orphan (1968) and Prostitute (1968) reaffirmed the above quotation's point. In the novels the author has portrayed a bewildered people suffering and frustrated with life in their environment, strangely changed by the socio-economic system. Prostitute, unlike Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba deals with the prostitute and her filthy world in a more direct manner. The novel joins with the strand which had been running through the literature of the African people for centuries. This strand is, to use Patricia Haward's words, "red, the red of wounds and anger."[20]

In this prose-poetic novel, Oculi probes through the hardened mind of the toughened city woman, into the wounds of not only the prostitute alone but also of her people. Like a sensitive surgeon, the novelist probes and lays the wounds bare for the reader, sometimes taking the form of flare-ups of total protest against the social, political and economic situations in neo-colonies.

In Prostitute Oculi's rich thoughts are brought out through the compacted mind of the prostitute. She is sitting, meditating on the numerous implications of her filthy life in the midst of the dirty, squalid surroundings supposed to be her home:

> She sat very still. Around her was the stubborn stench of undrained urine. Some of the urine was hers, especially on the nights when business had been good. Some was of the other women and their children. She shared the debe-roofed mud-walled slum-block flats with them. Slum flats are one of the few things people share a lot in towns. (p. 9)

This kind of vivid description permeates the whole novel. It

concretizes the political symbolism contained mostly in the numerous passages in the book which deal with the theme of dirt and decay. As the reader reads about the dirty decaying and decomposing environment and about a ditch of muddy water mixed with urine, semen, vomit, and other filth around the prostitute's slum shack, the author is ready too to give him, in an ironic tone, the picture on the other side of the coin:

> The Minister of Community Development walked out of a black car ... A very black driver clad in white uniform and a cap with a stiff front protrusion had jumped out, rushed to the back, opened the door, then jerked his back into an erect position with a salute shot out from one side of his head ... A fat mass had paused, indifferent to the hustle outside. (pp. 14-15)

The above scene is, in turn, contrasted with that of little eager children who swarm outside a reed enclosure in the Chief's compound, peeping at whatever is taking place inside between the Chief and the Minister:

> Some had dry mucous all around their noses, some were naked, some had patches of clothes difficult to tell from a skin patch. (p. 15)

Then, the whole situation is climaxed by cries of an old woman who shouts out requests to the Minister while some men try to quieten her:

> "Child, we here ... our eyes are dying ... have you brought any medicine ... or some blanket for this killing cold?" (p. 16)

It is emphasized that this Minister of Community Development is the

one who deflowers Rosa. He is the one who draws Rosa to prostitution. He becomes the cause and source of prostitution. Through and by him Rosa loses her virginity and her name; and the author is careful not to use the girl's name in the rest of the book. She becomes just "prostitute." In this way she represents all whose lives in society do not demand of them to have that much identity of names. Through the prostitute's monologues, thoughts and meditations, Prostitute becomes a very bitter medium for socio-political protest and commentary.

The theme of betrayal runs throughout the novel. With it the feeling of discontent and exasperation pointed at the politicians in the neo-colonies, comes out clearly. Whatever ideals the politicians in these societies had preached for and promised during the struggle for independence seem to have melted in thin air immediately after independence. Oculi here seems to want to show how there has been just a change of roles between the "departed" colonial masters and the rich politicians who live in luxury while posing as the peoples' leaders.

Oculi and other writers of his type, like Okot p'Bitek in Song of Lawino[21] and Two Songs,[22] Leonard Kibera and Samuel Kahiga in their anthology entitled Potent Ash,[23] and Ngugi wa Thiong'o in A Grain of Wheat[24] and Petals of Blood[25] among many others, show such an ambivalence. To quote Edward Hower again on this matter:

> What these writers depict is a society fragmented into many discordant elements: a fat, corrupt, powerful but insecure elite, a tiny [and rich] bourgeoisie ...; a poor and frustrated urban working class; and a mass of people who do not fit very well in any stratification system - peasants surviving under famine conditions, "forgotten" cattle keeping peoples, unemployed urban migrants living off relatives or by their wits, criminals [sic], beggars and prostitutes.[26]

The rift between the rich and the poor is what the writers are protesting against; it is what the prostitute in Prostitute is bitterly questioning. The fact that it exists, and is being perpetuated, indicates to the prostitute that many of the egalitarian ideals and promises of independence have been trampled upon and neglected. People, the poor people, are merely being used to create more wealth for the greedy rich ones. The prostitute decries the whole situation in her monologue:

> The whole thing is so blatantly mad. So pitiful and sordid. Cars, cars, cars! They are so strange. They are so treacherous! As soon as they are on the road they start hating pedestrians. And yet it is we pedestrians who tear out our muscles and explode our brains for them to be. We make them. It is we who put them on the road. It is we who pull them out of their sulky and silly exposure in those showrooms. Without us they would all be nothings and all their speeds and greeds with petrol and repairs and spare parts would lie trapped behind doors that would never open out wide into the sunshines they bathe in; and the murky rainpours and drench they wade in when weathers are dark and rough. I don't mind them colliding with one another in heated struggles for masterships ... let them castrate themselves and disembowel each other with their collisions ... Their screeches and screams at one another make me sick and mad inside. If they could only listen to my insides they would know .... They are really silly irritating bastards. (pp. 39-40)

I have intentionally quoted this at length because none of the critics who have examined Oculi's Prostitute seem to have realized the humorous fact that actually the word cars in this prostitute's thoughts is meant to mean the owners of the cars; the politicians, that is. In this context, therefore, pedestrians are, of course, the poor, downtrodden masses of people. A reading of chapter three of Prostitute with such substitutes will bring out the message in a very clear and humorous

way. The chapter starts with a slight separation between the owners of the cars and the cars themselves. As the prostitute's monologue develops, the two are fused into one noun: cars. The noun, an inanimate object, is then given some personification so that the reader may get the message that its about people, real people and not things. This is, I feel, the central, pivotal chapter of the whole work, for in it the most bitter feeling of protest emerges. The prostitute's monologue manages to concretize the rift between the "silly bastards" and the "pedestrians." The former, the politicians (cars) are busy fighting among themselves for power and glory, and their empty political speeches (screeches and screams) are just simple lies on the political platforms (showrooms) calculated to lead them to their luxuries and exploitation (greed for petrol, repairs, and spare parts). In this we get a clear echo of Okot p'Bitek's Song of Lawino when Lawino laments thus:

> And while the pythons of sickness
> Swallow the children
> And the buffalos of poverty
> Knock the people down
> And ignorance stands there
> Like an elephant,
>
> The war leaders
> Are tightly locked in bloody feuds
> Eating each other's liver ...
> ... If only the parties
> Would fight poverty
> With the fury
> With which they fight each other
> If diseases and ignorance
> Were assaulted
> With the deadly vengeance ...
> ... The enemies would have been
> Greatly reduced by now.[27]

The prostitute's thoughts, monologue and osbervations show how all

this has created a dehumanised, harsh and flimsy world of people like herself. She is a symbol of regression although in this work she mockingly calls herself a symbol for "a guidepost on the road to progress."

The author has been able to create a narrator who, being a poet, is able to view a spacious spectrum of people through very penetrating eyes which strip naked all those parts of them which are most contemptuous and revealing. At times, like a child narrator, the prostitute has assumed the ignorant eyes she is supposed to have, the apolitical eyes. This has enabled her to comment on very political issues with so much innocence. Her monologue has managed to see directly into the reality of the lives of the politicians and the elites, showing how they are, in fact, the main source of her filth, degradation and dirt:

> Your qualifications qualify me into the edges of those pits that flow day and night with fermented stale urines and washings of clothes, slum clothes. Your car keys you wave at me to unlock my body with unlock the tiny door to my dungeon in the slums, opens the gates to the arena infested with red-eyed vampire bedbugs. (p. 28)

The recurrent symbol contained in the constant mentioning of the bedbugs emphasizes the fact that instead of helping the people build the nations and advance forward towards genuine independence and real progress, the politicians and elites (collectively called the "vampire bedbugs") have been feeding fat on the peoples' sweat. They have become the keys to the dungeon doors. At the same time the fact of the "collisions" of the politicians as indicated in the symbol and metaphor of "cars" is repeated too with the bedbug symbol:

> The bedbugs are there, I know, nosing around hurriedly, relentlessly, embracing here and there or

> rubbing noses in collision while in search of blood to suck, as if it is their meal by right. And why not? Who owns me, who expects me around, who misses me, who glows at my presence except them? (p. 23)

One has got to read between lines to understand the symbols which the prostitute's monologue brings out in a very hidden way. While she is bitter against her tortured, uncertain existence surrounded by filthiness and rottenness, she is fully aware that the "bedbugs," the "cars" are the main source of her misery.

Yet, at the same time the prostitute in Oculi's Prostitute is not totally fatalistic. She shows constant flare ups of hope and optimism. She talks of "the graveyard" of "the cars" and the way she gets sweet feeling when she sees the cars being dismantled:

> That night, dismantling things tasted sweet. I no longer saw the visions of those frames and bodies of cars tumbling out their obesity and their swollen masses ... Their awkward obesity on them rattling and crumbling there before me from the rough fibre of the muscles of the mechanics sprang waves of excitement up my spine until I felt like choking. It all spoke to me that sublime moment. It spoke of latent life yelling out eternal arrogance. (pp. 36-37)

Earlier on, the prostitute's thoughts had dwelt on the question of revenge whose source would be in the suffocating and decomposing filth in the ditch of dirty water:

> One of these days those sordid things suffocating in that pool will get ideas. Supposing they overflowed. They may trap those cars with their drivers who do not even look at those things that are on and under there. If those things overflowed and trapped those drivers, they would choke and drown them with mad ferocity and flaming revenge. It will be so horrible a sight to see. But the mad commit holy murders only! I could

> almost pray for that day to come quickly now that
> I recall the bleedings in my soul for the torment
> that reigns in that pool. (p. 33)

The prostitute in Prostitute is not, therefore, hopelessly and pessimistically lamenting her plight. She still senses the possibilities for change. She has not accepted her miserable life in a fatalistic manner. She would rather protest passionately against her degrading environment than keep quiet. Her protest utilizes symbols which are taken mostly from her "profession" and, thus, it blasts up through the very conditions which threaten to strangle and suffocate her humanity. In her protest we see the possibilities of getting rid of those conditions if only the sordid creatures suffocating in that ditch could overflow and carry out their revenge by drowning the cars and their drivers.

The novel ends with the prostitute left with a half-caste child whom she tells "a few thoughts today" (p. 125). In the thoughts are hidden waves of anger, hatred and disgust which are at times strangely mixed with love, pity, and hope. The half-caste child is, as we are told:

> [a] hatch of the careless layings in the slum
> Strange walking product
> Cruel new oil
> Smeared to underline the anointment of your mother,
> Me, and them all
> To a cursed new order! (p. 129)

In such a child there is a strange mixture of what is and should be African, and some "White Tarzan" - a product of rape both in sexual sense and in moral and material sense; a child of two worlds with pros-

titution as its heartbeat. This strange product is seen in Oculi's other work too. In Orphan, a half-caste child called Okello becomes the centre of ridicule, pity and disgust from other people around him. These people do not know what they should do with such a product which is sitting right in their midst. The half-caste child in both Prostitute and Orphan hints at a general situation confronting the African people: that of their "modern" man - a product of the African way of life which has been prostituted, and the white colonial masters' shadow which is right at the centre of Africa in other forms, independence and national flags and anthems notwithstanding! It is, in this manner that Oculi's Orphan and Prostitute gain a "much more explicitly fanonist" approach - to use Peter Nazareth's words.[28] The prostitute shows in a very explicit manner, the ongoing connection between the rich politicians in her society and the agents of the "departed" colonial and Imperialist masters.

In Prostitute, as in Okot p'Bitek's Song of Lawino, there is a form of lament for the past way of life. In this way of life there is the answer to what is happening in society today. It is very easy to generalize and conclude that such an approach is wishful thinking. However, it is important to understand that both p'Bitek and Oculi are not advocating a physical return to the past. Rather in Prostitute and in Song of Lawino there is a call for recognition and utilization of one's own real identity; a call to return to the values which treated all men equally and which advocated their brotherhood.[29]

The prostitute in Prostitute is both a symbol, a prey, and a character who is able to scrutinize and penetrate. Through her we are made

to feel and understand the realities of the socio-politico-economic life and the class aspects of our societies. Oculi has managed to create a perceptive narrator who detects and detests; a narrator who at times plays the innocent role of a bystander while in actual fact she is at the centre of most events. She has vitality and integrity which comes out clearly in her protest against the dehumanising conditions in which she dwells.

Our discussion brings us to another important work, Song of Malaya, by the renowned East African author/composer, Okot p'Bitek. The publication in East Africa, of Song of Malaya and Song of Prisoner under the collective title of Two Songs was, naturally, welcomed with very great enthusiasm by readers. This was so because the readers had already witnessed the poetic genius that Okot p'Bitek proved himself to be in his Song of Lawino, and, thus, they expected the same thrust in Two Songs -- a force which, I think, p'Bitek was unable to attain again. Although both Prostitute and Song of Malaya deal with the same subject and utilize the same medium of the prostitute as the narrator, it is obvious that the latter lacks the elaborate treatment which the former gives. I find Oculi's Prostitute much more critical and mature in its treatment of the filth and miseries of prostitution than p'Bitek's Song of Malaya. As such, I will devote much less space to discussion of the positive aspects of the work, for I would just be repeating what I have been saying so far concerning Prostitute's ideas and themes.

In Song of Malaya, like in Prostitute, a hardened city woman with no name except Malaya (Swahili for "Prostitute"), is thinking aloud, trying to show the realities of life in her society. In her words we

discover an all-round decay of society involving people from all walks of life: sailors, soldiers, murderers, prisoners, Sikhs, miners, engineers, schoolboys and their teachers, chiefs, bus and taxi drivers, industrial workers, shop assistants, politicians, priests and bishops, and so on. All these use her, and they, in this manner, become prostitutes too. As the back cover of Two Songs has put it concerning the matter, "Song of Malaya is a harshly beautiful, rip-roaring lusty farce about the hypocrisy and cant of African modern moralists." The ironical aspect of the poem is in that all those who condemn prostitution and prostitutes are the ones who are, in fact, at the centre of the trade. They work for some moral ideas and ideals which they themselves trample upon. They are, therefore, advocating their "weak-kneed morality" while abusing its very foundations. Let me pick a random example of "the priest" and illustrate how the malaya argues her case. Calling the priest's contradictory preachings "weak-kneed morality," the malaya asks:

> Do you actually pray
> To God
> To Bless each bee
> So that it should
> Stick to one flower? (p. 162)

This black priest seems to be a direct replica of Father Drummond in Mongo Beti's Le Pauvre Christ be Bomba in certain respects. They are all -- each in his own peculiar way -- sources of prostitution. While Father Drummond's case manifests itself in the sixa affair, Song of Malaya's priest's case is traced, ironically enough, to Jesus Christ himself:

Let's drink
To Magdalena who annointed
The feet of Jesus! (p. 166)

p'Bitek, therefore, takes us a step further in this instance to hint at the fact that the source of the trade can even be traced to the founding Master of Christian religion. As George Heron has commented on this matter:

> When Jesus was confronted by the moralists of his day with a prostitute who should have been stoned according to Jewish law, He gave the answer that Song of Malaya gives to modern moralists: If you are completely innocent yourself, then you may throw stones.[30]

This argument goes back to our earlier point that Okot p'Bitek's main contention is that everyone in society is guilty of the disease of prostitution. No one, according to p'Bitek, can cast any stone!

Among other major forces behind the malaya's world, money features prominently. We see this in the malaya's own words:

Welcome you teachers
... coming into the city
Your trouser pockets
Bulging with wallets

Chieftain
I see your gold watch
Glittering on your wrist
... Your shimmering briefcase
Is pregnant ... (pp. 130-131)

The money cult, therefore, has turned cash payments to be the sole nexus between man and man in society. The malaya does not trade her flesh for the enjoyment of sexual pleasure; neither is the malaya's song a tune in praise of sexual enjoyment. George Heron's article, "Okot and Two Songs: A Discussion: IV" overlooks this fact and, in fact,

argues contrary to it. He says:

> The poem is not a song in praise of prostitution, but it is in praise of sexual pleasure.
> And sexual pleasure is a good thing in African tradition. Europe probably gained its ideas of sexual behaviour from Saint Paul. Where ever they came from they have never been practiced, and the attempts to enforce them have created mental stresses and physical suffering at various times.[31]

Although I would not like to delve deeply into the subject of human sexual behaviour, for it would take us beyond the scope of this thesis, it suffices to say here that George Heron's article generalizes too much on the subject. While it may seem true that Song of Malaya does not praise prostitution, it is definitely not true to say that it is in praise of sexual pleasure. At a glance the poem can, indeed, seem as if it praises sexual pleasure. But when one reads between the lines the poem shows that the malaya does not get any sexual pleasure out of her relations with her numerous customers. All she is after is money. In fact she even talks about her loneliness and disgust through the course of her song:

> Come
> My darling
> Stop stabbing your
> Mum's heart
> With the peals
> Of your crying
>
> I am
> Deadly lonely
> My love ... (pp. 170-71)

George Heron stereotypes people, and he advocates the all too familiar myth of the peculiarity of sexual virility and experience of "the African tradition" even to the extent of arguing that "sexual pleasure

is a good thing in African tradition" as if it were a bad thing and a taboo in Europeans' or any other peoples' traditions. This "sexual pleasure" argument I think, leads us away from the real issues in Song of Malaya: the issues of a poor woman in the city who is being forced by circumstances to sell her body, and who is angry at those "moralists" who preach against the trade in public and who are her customers behind doors. This coincides with the prostitute in Oculi's Prostitute who reveals the meaning of "slum clearance" saying that the Parliamentarians' debates on "slum clearance" are, in actual fact, tactics of trying to erect "better and stronger roofs that do not leak when a big shot is with us, [and] better parking spaces for the dignity of their cars." (p. 83)

In this manner the moralists (represented here by the Parliamentarians), become both the customers and the pimps since they will have to recruit the prostitutes to their newly built flats, use them financially in terms of rents and fees, and sexually too as their partners. This is the hypocrisy which the malaya is against in Song of Malaya.

In spite of the above points, some of which might have, indeed, involved some reading into the work, I find Two Songs to be quite a hasty work especially when compared to the elaborate poem and masterpiece that Song of Lawino was. Both the Song of Prisoner and Song of Malaya have disregarded the authentic forces at play on the African social and political arena. The prisoner and the malaya (who is just another type of prisoner) are all made, in Two Songs, to justify their innocence by comparing the charges made against them with the social evils committed by those who hold economic and political powers. The

prostitute, for example, strives to show the moralistic contradictions inherent in the whole system, and instead of going deep into the ways of helping change the system she seems to rest assured that so long as others do similar evils matters should continue as they are in society.

When compared with the prostitute in Oculi's Prostitute, Okot's prostitute in Song of Malaya is, in fact, raving about very trivial matters. p'Bitek is not able to see the real causes of societal disequilibrium. His main argument presented through the malaya's words is that since there is such a long list and a large spectrum of the malaya's clientele, there is, indeed, some kind of social importance in her profession. Okot p'Bitek is trying, unsuccessfully, to argue that since many other people are involved in wrong doings then the malaya should also continue doing what she is performing. I find this to be a very repulsive, if not a naive kind of argument which does not concern itself with the sources of societal evils and diseases. One wonders what kind of "wealth and health" the prostitutes will have in the midst of the capitalistic, rotten and suffocating environment in which they live.

Song of Malaya's narrator is far less conscious of the situation than that of Oculi's Prostitute. Through her we discover a hurried and undisciplined work of art which instead of striving to eradicate diseases in society, goes round them and even hugs them.

I find M. Rugyendo's review of Two Songs to be the most meaningful and critical analysis of the poems to date.[32] In spite of Rugyendo's generalizations of calling all the prostitutes "social parasites" and,

thus, failing to analyse clearly the social class aspects of prostitutes, his conclusions are very much correct concerning Okot p'Bitek's Two Songs, and I will therefore quote them in full:

> In Two Songs one sees an attempt on the part of the author to rush slipshodedly over some of the gravest of Africa's problems. One sees a failure to come to definite grips with the concrete reality of the African continent and a nauseating concern with loose and petty things. I get the feeling that p'Bitek only wanted to turn out another work too quickly. The arguments advanced are windy and false ...
>
> All in all, Two Songs depicts the old bourgeois technique both in art and practical life of refusing to examine the root causes of society's evils and merely covering up the biting reality with an illusive maisma and looking for stupid scapegoats in an otherwise profoundly rotten world.[33]

Indeed, such a situation has made both Song of Prisoner and Song of Malaya look at the problems in society with distorted focuses. They have, in this way, disintegrated the vitality of Song of Lawino to a form of triviality which, as Rugyendo has put it, "has threatened [p'Bitek's] position as one of East Africa's leading writers."

Let us now turn our attention to W.E. Mkufya, a newly-emerging Tanzanian novelist. His novel, The Wicked Walk revolves around four major characters. First there is Maria -- a hardened city prostitute who has despaired and has decided in a pessimistic manner that the only alternative left for her is to make the best out of her degrading, poverty stricken environment. Secondly there is Nancy, Maria's daughter born out of an incestuous encounter between Maria and her brother Josephat. Nancy finds herself drawn gradually into a way of life not very different from her mother's. She discovers that so as to survive

in Dar-es-Salaam -- a capitalistic, money-oriented city -- she has to sell her body to those who have money. Caught between one of her major customers and her fiance, she dies after an attempted abortion fails. Then there is Deo, an "educated" young man who works as a chemist in an industry, and who notices all the injustices around him and yet seems helplessly impotent as far as their eradication is concerned. Deo is in love with and, in fact, wants to marry Nancy -- a fact which jeopardizes his job since his boss goes out with Nancy too. This boss, Magege, is the fourth main character. He is, to quote the back cover of the novel, "the manager (who) has the means to fulfill all his personal wants -- including young girls." Magege, like the Minister in Prostitute, draws young girls into prostitution, bribing them with what he knows they need badly since most of them are from poor families: money.

The setting of the action is in the city of Dar-es-Salaam -- once again following the pattern in Oculi's Prostitute and p'Bitek's Song of Malaya in which the city is at the centre as one of the major forces which produce prostitutes and prostitution. However, the city too acts as a microcosm of a neo-colonial society with most of its predicaments -- socially, politically and economically. Such plights and perplexities with the class division of society as their major determining factor, lead Maria to sell her body so as to be able to feed her daughter, Nancy, and enable her to go on with school. Maria, like the prostitute in Oculi's Prostitute is angry at her degrading life, and she, together with the other fellow prostitutes, talks bitterly in protest against such a situation. We see this in their conversation, for example in

the exchanges between Maria and Ana:

> "They have money," Maria interrupted, "they are big bosses and they use their weight in this city to win the freshest and most beautiful young women. They ruin them ..."
>
> "Jesus, what a rotten lot! And we say we have leaders, we have an ideal government, while some fools dirty it for their bestial satisfaction."
>
> ... "It is true Ana. You see a man dressed like a gentleman, talking with the most appreciable manners. This is the greatest hypocrisy in some of our leaders .... These are the same hypocrites who say prostitution has to be abolished! Who are the prostitutes, if not them? They already have money, they already have their wives. What have we? ... Nothing. These same fools come to condemn the dumping of babies in latrine pits, the same ones who say that pregnant school girls should be expelled from school, the same ones who plant the babies inside them ..." (pp. 57-58)

Maria and her fellow prostitutes see and experience all these contradictions; and since they are at the lowest level of the social class ladder, the level of those who have nothing but their labour and their sweat as their means of survival, they suffer most.

The novel interweaves the struggle of prostitutes like Maria and that of the poor, exploited workers in industries. Although there is no direct link made between the workers of the Mount Goat Rubber Industry and the prostitutes at Livingstone Street, one discovers in the words and slogans of the workers at the industry, that they are all one and the same. All their energies and sweat, their minds and their bodies have been and are being prostituted by the capitalist system:

> "Bloody swine. What shall I eat? What does he think my children live on? Sand? ... Or does he expect me to go into the streets begging? I have nothing to sell in brothels!" (p. 74)

This is a clear use of irony, for in actual fact the workers (both males and females) are all prostitutes in the world of The Wicked Walk. They have to sell their labour and sweat to be able to survive. The novel, therefore, has been able to show how neo-colonial societies are, in fact, huge houses of prostitution. Magege -- a sugar daddy and a corrupt manager has been shown to be just a symbol of the ruling petit bourgeois class in the neo-colonies. This class is, in turn, shown in The Wicked Walk to be in the services of the giant monopolies of the world. The left-overs it grabs notwithstanding, this class has been illustrated to be just guarding the interests of the world masters of capitalism. Even the workers know this blunt fact:

> The reporter went and faced other workers. One said, "Our other problems, my friends, are the oppression exercised on us by the employer. We are being exploited. The owners of this factory are West German capitalists.
>
> "They are from Frankfurt and they come from there every six months or so to collect their luck. What pains us so is that their interest is only in the money, not in the makers of the money. To them we are nothing." (p. 75)

The same treatment given to prostitutes along Livingstone Street is granted to the industry workers. When the customers visit the prostitutes they do not care about the poor women. Rather they are after mere outlets for their animal lust. Similarly the giant monopoly capitalists do not care about workers in their industries. All they are after is the profit gained each day. In this instance, therefore, Mkufya has managed to fuse together the plight of the prostitutes along Livingstone Street and that of the workers in Mount Goat Rubber Industry.

In The Wicked Walk like in Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba and Song of Malaya, religious institutions and people are shown to be a force which surrounds brothels with the halo of their "divine" consecration. We discover this in the protest conversation between Maria and Ana:

> "They are not going to appreciate your presence even when you are going to confess your sins. I tell you, believe me. They are going to stare at you with their fat, accusing eyes forgetting that you have once or twice slept with most of them." (p. 37)

The prostitutes in these works are, thus, aware of the stark contradictions amidst their societies. The theme of dirt runs throughout The Wicked Walk as in the other works examined earlier. This theme adds weight to the socialand political dilemmas discussed in the works. The ditch of dirty water thickened with stale urine and semen in Oculi's Prostitute, and the flies searching tirelessly on a dirty disorderly bed, on the plates and in the cupboard in The Wicked Walk (p. 69), just hint at a larger dirty, prostituted society. What one African author/critic, A.A. Aidoo, has said concerning the dirt in Ayi Kwei Armah's The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born (1968) applies here too:

> the main thesis behind the story is that what we see around us of the so-called modern Africa is nothing but one messy offal. A mess in which everybody from the establishments to the most oppressed is caught, irredeemably. The leaders are busy swindling the people with meaningless verbiage. And the people, frustrated and bewildered, are cynically looking out for ways, very often shady, out of their nightmares.[34]

Although it is not true that everybody is caught irredeemably as Aidoo would have us believe, for history has proved exactly the oppo-

site of the above pessimistic viewpoint; it is however, correct about the messy situations in the neo-colonies. Aidoo's outlook which comes out clearly in even the title of her article -- "No Saviours" -- is very much inclined to a more discouraging view than even the prostitute's in Oculi's Prostitute. In this case, I think, the prostitute is more politically aware and mature than the scholar that Aidoo is. The former knows and understands that from that "messy offal" there are numerous contradictions which are increasing each new day, giving more power to "the sordid things suffocating in the pool." This fact is stressed too at the end of The Wicked Walk. Although not directly from the mouth and actions of the prostitute, the words of Deo and Frank who ultimately belong to the same group of workers show the latent optimism in the poor people's future:

> "We know youth cannot make a total change on their own; they have to be under the guidance of a party which represents the people .... when we speak of youths being in the forefront of our national struggles, we can't misinterpret the roles of peasants and workers.
>
> "They are the forces of change, they are the core of everything. But youth, who are also workers and peasants, could trigger everything. They should participate fully as forces of change, as new blood and new energy, they should always be out front." (pp. 127-28)

So in both Prostitute and The Wicked Walk there are hints at and suggestions for change. We shall deal with this matter in a more detailed manner in a separate chapter which will examine various authors' views on the way out for the prostitutes.

This chapter has enabled us to see how the prostitute has been utilized by various African authors who have delved into the protest tradition. In Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba, the prostitutes have been

used as a protest symbol to embrace the overall irony of the novel which has clearly shown the role of the church in causing and spreading sickness and decadence rather than apostolic and spiritual "health." In Okello Oculi's Prostitute, Okot p'Bitek's Song of Malaya and W.E. Mkufya's The Wicked Walk, the authors have tried -- with varying degrees of success -- to examine the social, political, and economic realities of their societies through the eyes of the prostitutes. While the prostitutes in Prostitute and The Wicked Walk are morally respectable and to some great extent politically mature, the malaya in Song of Malaya, and, thus, her creator, has proved to have an immature social vision and weak political awareness. She has shown lack of critical understanding of her plight, so much that at times her protests have boiled down to outright trivialities.

Our survey has, of course, not managed to cover all that needs to be covered concerning the role of the prostitute in the protest tradition in African literature. Indeed, we realize that further avenues could be explored concerning the subject. For example, the literature of protest which has been pouring out of South Africa has also at times -- though not to as great an extent as in the above works -- utilized the character of the prostitute in responding to the needs of the oppressed South African people, in response to these peoples' social, political and economic aspirations. In the short stories of writers like Ezekiel Mphahlele, Lewis Nkosi, Alex La Guma and others in Come Back Africa: Fourteen Short Stories From South Africa,[35] for example, we see the prostitutes in the "shebeens," cheap cafes, and backyards of the so-called black townships bearing the burdens and difficulties

of apartheid and exploitation. Yet, I think, it would be mere repetition of what we have said already when examining the other works in which poverty, drunkenness, dirt, filth, and the rotten and suffocating physical environment around the prostitutes just hint at a larger rotten social, political, and economic environment. In this environment inequalities, injustices and exploitation of peasants and workers by the capitalist and imperialist system abounds, whether in colonial situations as in the case of South Africa, or in neo-colonial situations as seen in the worlds of Prostitute, Song of Malaya, and The Wicked Walk. For the way out, the angry eyes of the prostitute must be able to identify this major enemy -- a fact which shall be examined and verified in the next chapter.

NOTES

[1] Besides numerous literary works which have been produced with the tradition as their main point of focus, many critical works have been written too which deal with the subject; for example, Cosmo Pieterse and Donald Munro (eds.), Protest and Conflict in African Literature (London, Ibadan, Nairobi: Heinemann, 1969); G.A. Heron, The Poetry of Okot p'Bitek (London, Ibadan, Nairobi, Lusaka: Heinemann, 1976); Christopher Heywood (ed.), Aspects of South African Literature (London, Ibadan, Nairobi, Lusaka: Heinemann, 1976); Wole Soyinka, Myth, Literature and the African World (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976); and Adrian Roscoe, Uhuru's Fire: African Literature East to South (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), among many others.

[2] For an interesting reading of some poems of these poets see Margaret Dickinson (ed.), When Bullets Begin to Flower: Poems of Resistance from Angola, Mozambique and Guine (Nairobi: East Africa Publishing House, 1972), and Agostinho Neto, Sacred Hope (Dar-es-Salaam: Tanzania Publishing House, 1974).

[3] Louis James, "The Protest Tradition: Black Orpheus and Transition" in Cosmo Pieterse and Donald Munro (eds.), Protest and Conflict in African Literature (London, Ibadan, Nairobi: Heinemann, 1969), p. 109.

[4] See her African Literature in French (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp. 206-216.

[5] Kwabena Britwum, "Irony and the Paradox of Idealism in Mongo Beti's Le pauvre Christ de Bomba," Arts and Letters, 6, 11 (1972), pp. 48-68.

[6] Thomas Cassirer, "The Dilemma of Leadership as Tragi-comedy in the Novels of Mongo Beti," L'Esprit createur 10 (1970), 223-33.

[7] Fernando Lambert, "L'ironie et l'humour de Mongo Beti dans Le pauvre Christ de Bomba," Etudes Litteraires 7 (1974), pp. 381-94.

[8] Thomas Melone, Mongo Beti: l'homme et le destin (Paris: Presence Africaine, 1971).

[9] His article is available as mimeo, University of Dar-es-Salaam.

[10] Abioseh Mike Porter, "The Child Narrator and the Theme of Love in Mongo Beti's Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba," paper presented at the African Literature Association Meeting, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, March 1979. (Available in ALA Archives 1979, Department of Comparative Literature, University of Alberta.)

[11] Robert P. Smith Jr., "Mongo Beti: The Novelist Looks at Independence and the Status of the African Woman," College Language Association Journal XIX, 3 (1976), pp. 301-11.

[12] William Umezimwa, "Revolte et creation artistique dans l'oeuvre de Mongo Beti," Presence Francophone 10 (1975), pp. 35-48.

[13] Due to the absence of the original French version of Le pauvre Christ de Bomba, this quotation and all others are taken from the English translation, Poor Christ of Bomba (London: Heinemann, 1971).

[14] Thomas Cassirer, "The Dilemma of Leadership as Tragi-comedy in the Novels of Mongo Beti," L'esprit Createur 10 (1970), pp.223-233.

[15] In the same article as above.

[16] Ibid.

[17] See note number 10. Porter's article is very illuminating and has dug out some facts which other critics of Le pauvre Christ de Bomba have always overlooked, namely, a consideration of the theme of love via the eyes of the child which indicates the importance of the affective relationship between individuals in the novel. Porter illustrates how such an important yet neglected theme has been exploited by Beti in order to present reality. However, the critic's neglect of the material basis of the love relationships especially between Father Drummond and Denis has sapped most of the life and heartbeat of his article. In this way Porter has analysed the love relationship between Denis and the Father in a rather narrow perspective, missing the irony of the material motives behind the relationship which, I think, makes Denis not so much of a naive "lover" as Porter would have us believe.

[18] To borrow one critic's words.

[19] Edward Hower, "The Post-Independence Literature of Kenya and Uganda," East Africa Journal 7, 11 (1970), p. 25.

[20] Patricia Haward, "Orphan by Okello Oculi, Prostitute by Okello Oculi, and Dying in the Sun by Peter Pallangyo," Rev. Article, Mawazo 2:1 (1969), p. 69.

[21] (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1966).

[22] (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1971).

[23] (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1968).

[24] (London: Heinemann, 1967).

[25] (London, Nairobi, Ibadan, Lusaka: Heinemann, 1977).

[26] Op. cit., p. 28.

[27] Okot p'Bitek, Song of Lawino (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1966), p. 196-97.

[28] Peter Nazareth, The Third World Writer: His Social Responsibility (Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau, 1978), p. 10. In order to understand fully the weight of the qualifications of Orphan and Prostitute as having taken an explicit Fanonist approach it is advisable to read Frantz Fanon, Black Skin, White Masks, trans. Charles Markham, (London: Paladin Books, 1972).

[29] It is interesting to read Okello Oculi's interview concerning this matter in G.D. Killam (ed.), African Writers on African Writing (Evanston: Northwestern University Press,1973), pp. 127-36 in which, among other things, he says:

> "[Okot p'Bitek in Song of Lawino] confirmed this yearning we had for self-assertion, not only self in terms of ourselves, but self in the collective sense, what we felt was the African sense of assertion" (p. 128).

And later on he goes on to show how this self-assertion was and is a way of responding to various factors. He says,

> "We were responding to intrusions into our environment. We were responding to the needs of our people -- their political and social aspirations. We were responding to their cultural outrage."

This kind of response comes out clearly in Song of Lawino, Orphan, and Prostitute contrary to some critics' views which would have us belittle the works by believing that they have "narrow-minded stress on traditional life of the African."

[30] George Heron, "Okot's Two Songs: A Discussion - IV," Chris L. Wanjala (ed.), Standpoints On African Literature (Nairobi, Kampala, Dar-es-Salaam: East African Literature Bureau, 1973), p. 141.

[31] Ibid., p. 141.

[32] M. Rugyendo, "Two Songs by Okot p'Bitek," Uganda Journal 35 (1971), pp. 223-26.

[33] Ibid., p. 226.

[34] Ama Ata Aidoo, "No Saviours," G.D. Killam (ed.), African Writers on African Writing, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), p. 15.

[35] Herbert L. Shore and Megchelina Shore-Bos (eds.), Come Back Africa: Fourteen Short Stories From South Africa (New York: International Publishers, 1968).

CHAPTER THREE

THE WAY OUT: THE PROSTITUTE IN S. OUSMANE'S LES BOUTS DE BOIS DE DIEU, C. EKWENSI'S JAGUA NANA, N. BALISIDYA'S SHIDA, M.S. MOHAMED'S NYOTA YA REHEMA, AND N. WA THIONG'O'S PETALS OF BLOOD

Our survey of the treatment of the prostitute in African literature has revealed two major groups of authors so far. The first one is that of authors who have seen the prostitute as a creature caught irredeemably in the web of the profession's miserable life. These authors have viewed the prostitute's position in an obscurantist way, a way which has revealed some fog of unreality in the authors' world outlooks and which, in turn, has shown their whole approach to the question to be very pessimistic, if not idealistic. Examples in this group, among numerous others, have been David G. Maillu in most of his works -- if not all -- such as Unfit for Human Consumption, Mohamed S. Mohamed in his novel, Kiu, Okot p'Bitek's Song of Malaya, and to some extent, Abdoulaye Sadji in Maimouna.

The second group is that of authors who have protested in their works against the inhuman, rotten, and suffocating environment of the prostitute's world. This protest has, at times, been linked with the wider protest against the exploitation and oppression of an oppressed people, the prostitute included. However, these authors have shied away from suggesting directly a way out for the prostitute. Those who have touched on the subject have done so merely by hinting at it.

Writers such as Okello Oculi in his Prostitute and W.E. Mkufya in The Wicked Walk belong to this group. One of the possible reasons for

this attitude could be due to the fear of censorship by the neo-colonial governments whose cruel hands could easily ban any work of literature that is bold enough to show the oppressed people the way out of their poverty-stricken lives, and to show the contradictions in the contrast of the living standards of the poor, exploited masses and the few rich petit-bourgeois politicians. In this way, for Oculi's Prostitute and Mkufya's The Wicked Walk, for example, it was necessary for the authors to use a critical realist approach rather than socialist realist one because of precisely the above reasons of censorship.

In this chapter I examine works by authors who belong to a third group: the group which has taken a comparatively more progressive and bolder path than the two above, in their examination of the position and plight of the prostitute. These authors have -- with varying degrees of success -- shown the way out for the prostitute. I have selected Sembene Ousmane's Les Bouts de bois de Dieu (1960), Cyprian Ekwensi's Jagua Nana (1961), N. Balisidya's Shida (1975), Mohamed S. Mohamed's Nyota ya Rehema (1976) and Ngugi wa Thiong'o's Petals of Blood (1977) to represent works in this group.

I shall begin with Cyprian Ekwensi's Jagua Nana and Ndyanao Balisidya's Shida, for the two works have taken a similar approach to the question. Then, the other three works will be examined together since they too have taken a similar approach rather different from the two above.

Cyprian Ekwensi was born in 1921 in Minna, North Western State of Nigeria. He studied in various colleges in Nigeria before studying pharmacy in England, after which he taught biology and chemistry in Lagos

and Yaba. In 1951 he joined the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation in Lagos where he eventually became Head of Features. He held this position for a number of years, and later on became Director of Information in the Federal Ministry of Information in Lagos. He resigned from this position in 1966 before the outbreak of the Nigerian Civil War in order to go do the same work in the East that was to declare itself "Biafra" with such tragic results. Since the war he has gone back to his former profession of pharmacist.

Cyprian Ekwensi began his writing career by writing three "penny dreadfuls" or Onitsha Market chapbooks: When Love Whispers, The Leopard's Claw and Ikola the Wrestler -- all of which appeared between 1947 and 1948. He also wrote short stories, among which the best seem to have been "Banana Peel," "The Tinted Scarf," "Land of Sani," "The Cup Was Full," and "The Deserters' Dupe." These five were published in African New Writing and won an award of the British Council. Ekwensi wrote stories for children too, and has had five volumes of these stories published. Other works, beside his full-length novels, include a novella titled Yaba Roundabout Murder, a school novelette called Trouble in Form VI, two traditional stories titled Great Elephant-bird and The Boa Suitor, and another collection of nine short stories under the title of Lokotown and Other Stories.

It is imperative to read most -- if not all -- of the above works in order to understand better Ekwensi's full-length novels, for they form the basis of these later, longer works. For example, one discovers that the Onitsha school has had a clear influence on Ekwensi's novels. Adrian A. Roscoe has divided into two parts the dominant characteristics of the Onitsha Market literature which Ekwensi has inherited

in his novels:

> They are a fascination for the modern western way of life associated with the cities, and a concern solemnly to warn the young and innocent of the dangers which the modern age holds out for them.[1]

In other words, while Ekwensi has inherited the fascination for the pressure of uncontrolled urbanisation, he has also inherited the moralistic outlook of the Onitsha Pamphlets which believe in sermon-like warnings rather than creatively showing concrete and scientific ways and means for the desired changes. This has been one of Ekwensi's major weaknesses in his novels. We shall expand this point in the course of our analysis in this chapter.

In 1954, Ekwensi's first novel, People of the City was published. As Jahnheinz Jahn, Ulla Schild and Almut Nordmann have put it concerning the novel:

> It was the first Nigerian full-length novel about contemporary life. The plot is loosely strung together, but the details build up the complex structure of the city life in Lagos.[2]

The fact of the plot being loosely strung together was another feature inherited from Onitsha; and it affected not only People of the City but also, at times, Ekwensi's other novels.

His other full-length novels are Jagua Nana (1961), Burning Grass (1962), Beautiful Feathers (1963), Iska (1966), and Africhaos (1969). All of them -- with the single exception of Burning Grass -- deal with the urban life and its implications on the people who find themselves in it. To quote Adrian A. Roscoe on this issue:

> One might go even further and call [Cyprian Ekwensi] West Africa's first picaresque author, for he excels in the depiction of the criminal side of city life: and a random selection of his characters reads like a roll-call for West Africa's underworld. Pimps, forgers, burglars, prostitutes crowd into his pages.[3]

It is Ekwensi's depiction of the prostitute that is our primary concern here; and we shall examine it in Jagua Nana. In this novel, as in his other urban novels, Ekwensi depicts the feelings and dilemmas of people who have moved from the rural areas and have drifted to the developing urban centers -- feelings and dilemmas characterised with the fear, anxiety and terror of a strange, complex and new way of life. Jagua Nana originated from one of the short stories in Lokotown and Other Stories called "Fashion Girl." It concerns a lusty and intelligent prostitute called Jagua Nana, so-called because the British car, "the Jaguar, is expensive, wanted, and ostentatious" -- to use Donald E. Herdeck's words.[4]

Jagua Nana is a character around whom everybody and everything revolves in the novel. She gives the novel a rich texture in tone, atmosphere and morality. She is a fashionable city prostitute who on the one hand is a warm-hearted, generous, loving, almost innocent character yearning for motherhood and security, and on the other hand, a volatile, jealous, painted woman, made up with tons of make-up, luminiscent bra, seductive arcs, and all that makes a professional prostitute. She is constantly in need of assurance from young men like Freddie that she is not old after all; and, like most urban people she is after "the glitter" of the city. Through selling her body, Jagua

is able to support her young lover -- Freddie -- generously, offering to finance his education abroad, while she is able too to support and maintain herself.

In Jagua, and through her we discover the author's philosophy about life. According to her, the trouble with the world is that "people take life too serious .... you die, you're dead .... It's over. You've left nothing, not a mark."

There are five main high moments in Jagua Nana's "unserious" life: Jagua at the Tropicana, at her room and toilet, at the letter writer's, Jagua seducing Chief Ofubara and, finally, Jagua at the river side in her home village. Through Jagua, the reader is made to visualize the hurly-burly of the city of Lagos -- its pimps, hustlers, prostitutes, and sophisticates. Through her and those she associates with, notably Uncle Taiwo -- the corrupt politician -- we get to know the tension of the politics in the crowded new cities of Africa, a tension which represents a major and wider crisis of the political scene in the neo-colonial societies. The slums, shacks and violence of Lagos in Jagua Nana represent what the majority of peoples' lives have been reduced to; and the cunning politicians and their parties -- reminiscent of Okot p'Bitek's Song of Lawino's politicians -- are shown to be merely fighting and struggling and killing each other for personal glory, fame and gains. Thus, where Jagua is involved politically, we discover the embittered attitude of the author towards the political situation in neo-colonial Africa. Her associate and client, Uncle Taiwo, with his large and grossly over-fed figure is meant by Ekwensi to be a representative of the politicians in the neo-colonies today, and, as John Povey has said

concerning him:

> With his crass appetites, his shameless and ruthless bargaining for votes, he becomes the epitome of all vicious power-hungry politicians. In the Falstaffian sense he is larger than life, yet he becomes, not a caricature but an appalling archetype of human greed.

The moment Jagua joins Uncle Taiwo on the political platform, the author fuses together the double-types of prostitutes. In Jagua we have a prostitute who has to sell her womanhood for money, and she equals Uncle Taiwo as she stands on the platform and cheats the people to give Uncle Taiwo their votes. When Jagua uses artificial and pre-rehearsed moans in her profession's bed, Uncle Taiwo also uses artificial and pre-rehearsed lies on his profession's platform. This then is an artistic fusion of the prostitute and the politician: they are one and the same in a sense. However, Ekwensi is, of course, ready to show the line of demarcation between the two: Whereas the former is a victim of circumstances and of a socio-politico-economic system which condemns her to filth and poverty, the latter is one of the causes of the miseries of the former, for he is one of the greedy few who feed fat on the sweat of the masses.

From the materialistic metaphor contained in the heroine's name, Jagua, to the life itself in the city of Lagos, we discover perceptions of not only Nigerian life but of all the capitalist world where "soulless" material gains play a major role in peoples' lives and where imorality, brutishness, and filth are the order of the day. Even Jagua herself, in spite of her view that the problem is that "people take life too serious," struggles hard day and night to attain the

material and sophisticated standards of the city. This kind of life has turned some people into prostitutes who must sell their bodies and minds in order to survive, few with dignity. It has created characters who are confused and who lack proper direction. So, even Freddie enters politics on his return from England as a way of attaining the badly needed cash power. He says, "I wan' money quick quick; an' politics is de only hope" (p. 137).

Jagua is, thus, surrounded by a wide spectrum of people --from rich and corrupt politicians, students, hoodlums (like Dennis), businessmen, expatriates, managers, "oil men," fellow prostitutes and so on -- all of them struggling in the midst of the forces of the city, and all of them are her customers wedded to city values and guided by its rules of man-eat-man. Robert July has spoken about these characters saying:

> [They are] vibrant, bawdy, optimistic, unusual, opportunistic, living from day to day in the noisy, crowded, yeasty, lusty, West African city of Lagos where the heat and the dampness never seem to deprive the Nigerian of his energy and his enthusiasm for living.[6]

This world of the tired businessman, the cruel, crooked, greedy, indefatigable, lusty, shrewd, and ruthless politician, the hoodlum, the fast car, packaged and cheap sex, and of careless abandon, finally tires Jagua, and she takes another direction in her life. The urban realities in Jagua Nana, as is the case with all of Ekwensi's urban novels, are characterised by chaos; and ideals, dreams, hopes, and values of the city life are all very powerful yet transient. The author shows that strong vestiges of traditional life still exert that force

on the people of the city, and they ultimately overpower Jagua who then decides to return to her village to spend the rest of her life. There she hopes to get security she has always known it to exist. The prostitute who was imprisoned and entangled in the city and who seemed to be unable to extricate herself from its clutches thus finally resolves that the solution to her troubled existence is to go back to her village. This is, of course, a personal solution, if at all, and not a revolutionary, mass solution. There will still be millions of Jaguas in the capitalist world who will continue suffering the humiliation of selling themselves if nothing is done about the system that breeds the causal conditions.

Ekwensi, in Jagua Nana has portrayed the sophisticated, flashy, and vibrating milieu of the city where tension, immorality, brutishness, and filth overflow; and is suggesting, by sending Jagua back to her village, that the way out for the prostitute is to do what Jagua has decided to do, for in the novel -- though hardly in reality -- village life is easy and soft. Here, we are told, she will be able to cease gradually "to picture the riotious life [which will] become an echo too distant to touch her." In one of his articles, Robert July has correctly called this "the weakest part of the book [since it] remains unconvincing."[7] I will examine Ekwensi's romantic "solution" after my analysis of the next work whose outlook is similar to Jagua Nana's.

Before examining our next work, Ndyanao Balisidya's Shida (a Swahili novel), it is important first to summarily examine the history of the theme of town-country conflict cum-back-to-the-village which is very "popular" in Swahili literature. This will give us some important

background knowledge and information on the theme in the Swahili novels, and its social, political and economic implications on the authors' world outlooks and on characters like the prostitute.

The theme appeared first mainly in the works of Shaaban Robert, a poet, novelist and essayist from Tanga, Tanzania. He tried to probe into the town-country contradiction in his novel, Utubora Mkulima (1968) (Lit: "Utubora the Farmer") -- an attempt which, however, ended up being a glorification of the countryside. In this novel, the hero, Utubora, runs away from the suffocating life of the city to the countryside where he tries to become self-reliant. However, at the end of the novel we see how instead of prospering, Utubora falls back to a mere subsistence level of life. With a Roussean vision of the countryside, Shaaban Robert's solution to the town-country contradiction fails to understand that self-reliance is an impossibility in a capitalist world.

The treatment of various social issues already started by Shaaban Robert continued and continues to be a focal point for modern Swahili novelists. The nutritionless theme of town-country conflict and the movement back to the countryside as a solution has been dished up by many poets, playwrights and novelists. Novelists such as Father Felician Nkwera in an indirect way in his Mzishi wa Baba Ana Radhi (Lit:"An obeddient son will have blessings"), (1967), playwrights like Penina Muhando in her play Hatia (Lit: 'Guilt') (1974) and many others have similar inclinations as that of Shaaban Robert's seminal Utubora Mkulima. On the one hand some seemed to be dealing with the communal societies

affected by neither foreign intrusion nor class divisions; on the other hand others, and here I am specifically thinking of Nkwera's Mzishi wa Baba Ana Radhi, followed the bourgeois Negritude line that there were no classes in Africa prior to colonialism, thus advancing a notion of "progress" through regression and ngoma worship. ("Ngoma" literally "drumming" -- has become a derogatory collective term to signify bourgeois notions of traditional culture). This exaltation, of course, falsified societal motion and dynamics by advancing the idea that all was/is milk and honey in the countryside.

The theme of the town-country conflict and the movement back to the village is no better illustrated in the current Swahili novel than in Ndyanao Balisidya's Shida. The novel tells the story of the lives of a boy called Chonya and his childhood girlfriend, Matika (rebaptized "Shida" which means "hardship") in the city of Dar-es-Salaam. Balisidya's Bildungsroman shows the two characters undergoing a gradual re-education as they discover the poisonous man-eat-man realities of city life. Out of the hardships, filth, and deprivations plus inequalities, Chonya is forced to turn into a "thief" while Matika prostitutes her body. Chonya is caught and jailed, and, in prison he re-examines his life as his elders visit him. Finally he is convinced that the best solution is to return, after his hard life in jail, to the rural areas and start a new, "free" life. Meanwhile Matika had already taken that step and had gone back to her village after spending many years in the city.

Such then, in short, is the plot of Shida. It is almost like that of Cyprian Ekwensi's Jagua Nana in its treatment of the theme, except

that Balisidya is more analytical than Ekwensi in some aspects of the problem. For example, Chonya's re-examination and re-education reveal various aspects of the class society in which he lives. His words, finally, touch the truth of the whole situation -- a fact which, funny enough, the novelist neglects at the end of her novel:

> In that spark of a moment ... he decided that money was the source of his problems; but behind this money there were other factors too ... he knew that he did not have money because he did not have a job .... he did not have the money to bribe the big officers in government offices and companies ...'It is true,' he thought, 'however, even if I had a job I would not manage to live in comfort and luxury like the big people do so long as the prices of essential goods and life in general is extremely expensive.' Money, as he saw it now, was a secondary reason. The environment and the whole system was then the primary source of all unhappiness and poverty in peoples' lives. (pp. 53-54)

In these words, the novelist gives us a clear picture of the class division of society. Chonya discovers that the real cause of evils in his society is the social-class system which allows a wealthy petit-bourgeois class to live in luxury and comfort while the majority of people life in abject poverty in which even the basic needs and necessities for life are not available. Although to see class differences is not necessarily to see the capitalist system which is the main beast -- to see this, one must be aware of its etiology, future, weak points, and so on -- Shida must be commended for its good examination of the rural-urban gap and the reasons behind the miseries of such people like prostitutes by relating them to the class system of society.

The main weakness of both Ekwensi's Jagua Nana and Balisidya's

Shida is in the solutions offered for the evils in society. In the former, Ekwensi, as if in an afterthought, discovers that he will not have solved the problem merely by returning Jagua to her home village; and so, by dint of good luck, he makes her something else. Thus, in the final, contrived, unconvincing, and happy anticlimax, when Jagua returns she wins a fortune of fifty thousand pounds which she decides to use for charity purposes and for another form of "decent" trade; she sets herself up as a merchant woman.

Ekwensi's solution does not involve the smashing and rebuilding of the whole socio-politico-economic system. Rather, it advocates a reformist path on which prostitutes will have a change of heart, go back to the villages and take up some other "decent" trade. Furthermore, dependence on "good luck" or on chance disguised as providence as a solution to the misery of being exploited by the agents of capitalism is, to say the least, very unconvincing and impractical. It brings to mind the national lottery syndrome.

Most critics of Ekwensi's novels, so far, have been labouring around and lashing out at the stylistic and formal defects in the works; and in this way they have, most of the time, treated the question of content as secondary.[8] Arguing that all other Ekwensi's novels, besides Jagua Nana to a certain extent, have contained "amateurish blots and blunders," to quote Bernth Lindfors,[9] the critics have insisted that Jagua Nana is Ekwensi's best novel, and have, therefore, overlooked or just touched on the surface of the crucial question of the solution to the problems which the novel poses. A few exceptions, however, exist, and among them is Eustace Palmer.[10] This critic has drawn various

conclusions concerning Ekwensi's Jagua Nana which are worth quoting, (though by no means are all of them correct):

> Ekwensi hardly ever manifests a consistent moral attitude, his main preoccupation being the sensationalism created by vice. ... There is certainly a lot of "life" in the book. But the novelist's task is not merely to convey experience, but also to attempt to clarify and order the chaos of experience ... That is what Arnold Kettle means when he suggests that the novelist should impose pattern on his work and manifest a consistent moral attitude. One would not indict Ekwensi for taking us into the world of prostitutes, pimps, dishonest politicians, organized crime and thuggery, but one can indict him if he fails to take some moral standpoint.[11]

Palmer goes on to give prescriptions to Ekwensi on how he should have written Jagua Nana and says he should have given excuses for his characters by showing "plausibly that they are victims of their societies"[12] and he further suggests that the use of irony could have at least indicated that Ekwensi disapproves of them.

Although I would like to dwell on the subject of prescriptive criticism such as the above in which non-novelists dictate formulas to established novelists on how to write novels, it is unfortunate that this is beyond the scope of the present chapter. However, it is clear from it that Palmer either misread or did not understand the way Ekwensi handled the moral questions. I do not think Ekwensi should have created a weeping, miserable Jagua in order to make her a victim of her society. Nor is it true that Ekwensi did not use irony in his criticism of his society. Jagua is a struggling woman, and she is not simply an "immoral" woman or "a nymphomaniac with a crazy passion for sex and bright lights of Lagos"[13] as Palmer would have us believe. I think Palmer has taken a very simplistic and naive attitude towards

Jagua Nana and, especially towards Jagua the prostitute. He has missed, or intentionally ignored the irony in the fusion of the prostitute and the polician; he has overlooked or deliberately disregarded discussing the solution offered by the novelist which, I think, is the main weakness of the novel. Instead, his prescriptions have advocated the idea that if Ekwensi had shown his disapproval of the evils -- as if he did not! -- then everything would have been alright. He does not realize that it is not enough to just give "criticism of the threat which the dangerous Lagos underworld presents to civilized standards." He does not discern the fact that the solution is not just to criticize but to try to change the system. The question of real change has been given a very small space in Palmer's criticism of Ekwensi's Jagua Nana; and instead, his suggestion that Ekwensi should have offered more criticism of Jagua the prostitute and the "dangerous Lagos underworld" has served as an excellent example of how to point the gun at the wrong enemy. Palmer has overlooked the socio-politico-economic dynamics operating in the creation of people like Jagua or Dennis -- forces which, he should have insisted, Ekwensi must aim to change for the betterment of the masses of poor people. This is the same shortcoming in Ekwensi's suggestion for the solution of the problems and plight of the prostitute. It leaves untouched the system which creates evils in society.

In Balisidya's Shida we see the same shortcoming of leaving untouched the system that is the root cause of the problems depicted and the source of the division of society into social classes. Ironically the novel leaves the system untouched even after Chonya has revealed that that system is the root cause of his miseries. Instead, the novel suggests that salvation of the poor people like prostitutes will come

through education, dedication to hard work, and the co-operative endeavour between them and the government. This is essentially a reformist point of view aiming not to eradicate contradictions through violent struggle but to harmonize them by "consciousness raising" and moralizing. It does not advocate real change in the prostitute's and other poor peoples' lives. Instead of crushing the oppressive system -- which the novel admits is the source of all evils -- the novel takes the reader by surprise when it advocates collaboration between the poor, exploited people and the petit-bourgeois government of exploiters.

Another critic among the few who have taken up the question under consideration is Patricia Mbughuni. Her paper, "The Theme of A New Society in the Kiswahili Prose Tradition: From Oral to Contemporary Literature," in spite of its misleading title which suggests falsely that oral literature is not among contemporary literatures and that it belongs to the ancient literatures, is one of the very few works to date which have made an extended commentary on Shida. The paper however, shows great indifference to the weakness we have mentioned about Shida. The "critic" tries in this paper, to define -- very unsuccessfully -- utopian thinking among Swahili prose writers. She fails to interlink the shallow "definition" with her "analysis" in the main body of the paper. Her attempts, therefore, end with a very unfocussed view of the Swahili authors' treatments of the theme of a new society. In this manner, the paper, like the novels it examines -- notably Shida -- negates the socio-economic forces that generate the problems that the authors want to solve.

What then, can we conclude about the treatment of the prostitute

in primary and secondary African literature which belongs to the school of the back-to-the-countryside movement? By making their prostitutes run away from the problems and leaving prostitution untouched, instead of making the prostitutes fight together with the workers to eradicate such problems right in the city where they are in their most concentrated and evident forms, the authors of this school have followed a reformist path. In this way they have just added more problems for characters such as the prostitute instead of showing them the real, revolutionary way out.[16]

The above reformist situation, however, has not always remained static in African literature. A number of works of literature have appeared which have turned out to be more scientific and positive in their suggestions of solutions to the predicament of the prostitute. Among them, the most notable ones, I think, are Sembene Ousmane's masterpiece, Les Bouts de bois de Dieu, Mohamed S. Mohamed's Nyota ya Rehema and Ngugi wa Thiong'o's Petals of Blood.

Sembene Ousmane, a novelist, short story writer, director and film maker, was born on January 8, 1923 at Ziguinchor-Casamance, Senegal. Born to a family of Wolof fishermen, Sembene had to struggle against great odds for his education, most of it self-education. He practised various trades, starting as a fisherman, a mason, and then a mechanic. The third trade took him to the World War II front in Italy and Germany as a military port worker after being drafted into the French army. Demobilized at Baden-Baden on the Rhine river, Sembene (this is, actually, his family name) returned to Senegal in 1947 when there the strike of the railway workers started. This strike inspired his novel, Les Bouts de bois de Dieu. He soon, however, returned to France where he worked as

a docker for ten years in Marseille while furthering his literary ambitions. At the same time he became a trade-union leader. It was during this time that he started writing. In 1957 he settled down in Dakar, but continued to travel widely around the world, especially in Europe, Africa, Cuba, China and the U.S.S.R.

Besides Sembene's career as a writer, he has established himself as the best and most prominent African film director. Most of his films such as Borom Sarret (1966), La noire de ... (1966), Vehi Ciosane (1969), Manda-Bi (in French "Le Mandat") (1969) and others -- with the exception of some like E Mitai (Lit. "God of Thunder") -- are based on his novels and short stories which he has published.

Sembene Ousmane's first novel, Le Docker Noir (1956) is about a white woman who embezzles the manuscript of a black dock-worker's novel in order to publish it in her own name. The novelist however, to quote Janhainz Jahn, Ulla Schild, and Almut Nordmann, "failed to express his message,"[17] and the novel has gained little critical appreciation. On the otherhand, his second novel, O pays, mon beau peuple! was very well received especially in France, and it has been translated into Dutch, Albanian, Japanese, German, Hungarian, Slovak, Rumanian and Bulgarian. It is a novel about a young Senegalese who after eight years from home returns to his village, witha white wife. There, his misguided efforts to change his old folks and their customs result in his defeat. His third novel is called Les bouts de bois de Dieu (1960). The story is about the long, bitter strike of the workers on the Dakar-Niger railroad. His other works include L'harmattan (Paris: Presence Africaine, 1964), Xala, a novel (1970), four novelettes and some short stories.

In all of Sembene Ousmane's literary and visual creations, one discovers that his main concernis an examination and deep questioning of the miserable lives of the poor,exploited masses of people. He looks at the sources of such misery and foresees its possible eradication which will, finally, lead to an improved and healthy human condition. Such pre-occupations surface clearly in his novel, Les bouts de bois de Dieu. The novel describes the long strike of the Dakar-Niger railroad workers who were demanding decent wages and working conditions. The popularity of its theme has been demonstrated, I think, in its wide translation into various languages including English, Italian, Japanese, Dutch, Uzbek, Lithuanian, Ukrainian, and Hungarian. A Swahili translation is under preparation.

Before starting to discuss the role of the prostitute in this work, it is important to examine events and the major themes in whose context the prostitute character emerges as a political activist. I would like to do this by first taking note of the author's note to the novel, which in part, explains the implications of the strike he has written about:

> Les hommes et les femmes qui, du 10 Octobre 1947 au 19 Mars 1948, engagèrent cette lutte pour une cie meilleure ne doivent rien à personne: ni à aucune "mission civilisatrice," ni à un notable, ni à un parlementaire. Leur exemple ne fut pas vain: depuis, L'Afrique progresse.

This note asserts the self-determination and self-reliance of an oppressed people. They are confident of themselves and they expect no help from any outsider -- with the exception of the financial aid sent by French trade unionists, a significant gesture from fellow-sufferers

though not a determining influence on the strike's outcome. The author's note, therefore, is an optimistic one which shows that when united together, an oppressed people can exert their oneness and achieve their goals. This fact has been illustrated clearly in the novel. In this way, the novel became one of the first literary works from Africa which showed efforts to break away and free from the chains of colonial and capitalist exploitation.

In Sembene's novel, like in Richard Rive's novel Emergency (1964) and Peter Abraham's novel, A Night of their Own (1965), the author has shown an inner movement of workers caused by a political and economic order which condemns them to exploitation, leading to eventual paupers' deaths. All these have been portrayed in a very realistic manner so that Les bouts de bois de Dieu has become a great social statement and a story which does not concern only the Dakar-Niger railway workers of 1947 and 1948 but all the exploited and oppressed workers in the colonies and neo-colonies today.

The inner volcano which erupts in the novel encompasses and involves people from all walks of life: the young and the old, men and women, industrial workers, housewives, union leaders, prostitutes, and so on. To quote Donald Herdeck on this issue:

> In God's Bits of Wood, Ousmane attempts to show the total effect of a strike on both a whole community and the individual members of that community.[18]

In this strike we note the roles and reactions of the community members whose exploitation by the world monopolies -- here represented by France -- turns them into political activists. This fact has been stated too on the back cover of the American edition of the English translation of

the novel:

> The characters, however, are not mere vehicles for these historical and cultural themes, but human beings whose enormous tasks serve to underscore their strengths and frailties. The agonies they experience at having to place priorities on values, goals and personal relationships perhaps parallel those of any people who hold freedom necessary for life.

In talking about the same subject, and about the novel in general, Soyinka has shown the universality of the struggle of the workers in Les bouts de bois de Dieu. Among other things, Soyinka has said that the novel has "recreated humanity," and, to quote him in full:

> [The novel] is a powerful reconstruction of a strike by African railway workers in 1947, a work which reaches beyond mere narrative in its meticulous delineation of human strengths and weaknesses, heroism and communal solidarity, and it attains epic levels. As with all good epics, humanity is recreated. The social community acquires archetypal dimensions and heroes become deities.[19]

Although a full discussion and examination of the roles of different individuals, especially of Bakayoko, the top leader, and of different groups of people in this strike would be very fruitful in the understanding of Les bout de bois de Dieu, that task is beyond the boundaries of this work. It is important, however, to take note of the fact that in showing the different people who unite and hope to attain their well-being and dignity, Sembene Ousmane has managed to illustrate how such a struggle can change individuals. For example, Ramatoulaye who was always a quiet, unassuming and very polite woman becomes strong and violent as she heroically kills vendredi the ram. In this novel, con-

trary to their "traditional" role in the society, that of being housewives whose places are in kitchens only, the women of the area, wives of the railway workers and others, are affected and changed by the strike. In alliance with their men, they become involved in the strike and, in fact, turn into leading political activists. Contrary to their kitchen role they address meetings and they demand that they take an active and leading role in the strike.

Among the women there is Penda, the prostitute, who turns into a great political leader. We are told that Penda as a prostitute had hated all men since she saw them as animals who were using her body and soul. Yet, in this struggle she works by their side and gains not only dignity and pride, but also respect from both men and women. This change, however, does not come suddenly. We are made to see Penda's gradual growth from a prostitute whose room's walls were covered with photos of movie stars and singers, and prints and drawings of white women from fashion magazines, to Penda who takes care of Maimouna the blind singer and her child, to Penda who takes over the distribution of the food rations to the women -- thus gaining their confidence gradually -- and finally to Penda the representative of the women, and their leader who joins hands with the strikers and leads the march of the women from Thies to Dakar. Her full development is seen in her speech when she argues for the participation of women in the strike:

> Je parle au nom de toutes les femmes, mais je ne suis que leur porte-parole. Pour nous cette grève, c'est la possibilité d'une vie meilleure. Hier nous ri ons ensemble, aujourd'hui nous pleurons avec nos enfants devant nos marmites où rien en bouillone. Nous nous devons de garder la tête

> haute et ne pas céder. Et demain nous allons marcher jusqu'à N'Dakarou -- Oui, nous irons jusqu'à N'Dakarou entendre ce que les toubabs ont à dire, et ils verront si nous sommes des concubines! Hommes, laissez vos êpouses venir avec nous! Seules resteront à la maison celles quo sont enceintes ou qui allaient et les vieilles femmes (pp. 288-89).

An idea which at first causes some murmuring, shouting, remonstrance and protest develops into an epic march from Thies to Dakar which tests the will and strength of women and proves that they are a force to reckon with. It becomes one of the major forces which pressures the colonialists and capitalists to the point of giving in to the workers' demands. Concerning this participation of the women in this struggle, Dorothy Blair has said:

> The author ... [has revealed] a greater understanding of the mentality and reactions of all types and ages of women than any African writer before or after him, to date. The lives of the women form, in fact, the central core of the drama. While the men hold meetings, talk and decide policy, the women for five, long,hungry months face the practical problem of existence, suffer the greatest hardships, feel most deeply the losses, and prove the true heroines of the struggle, even though at first they have little idea of the principles for which the men are in conflict.[20]

Penda, among the women, is not new to this life of hardships, filth and deprivation. As a prostitute she had lived the life even before the strike, and therefore, the strike merely enhances her bitterness against it. The author has carefully and with details, described the epic march of the women, and, as Donald Carter has put it:

> [In this march] the full catalogue of cruel incidents is ferociously detailed for us -- but of all of it the shape in the end is that of history, always at best a stand-in Muse.[21]

During the women's march to Dakar we see Penda as Wilfred Cartey has said, as "a symbol of strength that prevents a stranglehold of chaos from undoing the unity that will lead the marchers to success."[22] We see her constantly urging and encouraging the women to march forward, while she, wearing the soldier's cartridge belt marches at the head of the procession. The ordeal of the strike in general, and the women's march in particular, causes the hardened and toughened side of Penda to surface and this, among other things, enables others, even Bakayoko, to appreciate Penda's faithfulness and dedication. The author manages to secure his readers' appreciation of Penda's leadership and loyalty, and, as she gets killed by police bullets when the marchers reach the outskirts of Dakar, we see her death as a martyr's death. It turns into a sacrificial death which creates anger in the marchers' hearts and which, in turn, creates extra strength to carry on the cause she had led so well. I shall discuss fully the implications of the role of Penda, the prostitute in Les bouts de boits de Dieu after I have examined two other works with a similar inclination.

The next work for discussion is a Swahili novel, Nyota ya Rehema by Mohamed S. Mohamed. The title of this novel, which means "Rehema's Star," is very misleading. At a glance, without reading the novel, the title sounds very mystical and even reactionary for it connotates something of a predestined life for Rehema -- the main character in the novel. However, a reading shows that the novelist wanted to show that there is a necessary historical predestination of the Rehemas of the world who will finally be free from the exploitative system of capitalism -- through their struggles.

In this second novel by this most gifted Tanzanian novelist, Mohamed

writes about a struggling people in the pre-independent feudalistic Zanzibar. We see in the world of this novel, a tiny section of society -- the feudal lords -- growing fat on the sweat of the majority of the people. Fuad is one of the lords who exploits the labour of others while he is completely divorced from the process of material production. Typical of the feudalistic world, we witness classes born out of an exploitative division of labor blessed by the rising and flourishing of private property. The society here is based on agricultural economy, and it is precisely this that is in the hands of the feudal lords.

Mohamed shows the awakening of the people of Zanzibar and their struggle to regain their land and freedom from the feudal lords. At the centre of all this is Rehema, a young and beautiful girl who is dragged and forced by circumstances into prostituting herself. Segregated by her own rich father due to her skin colour, Rehema runs away from home in search of peace and freedom. She keeps on running without knowing her way until she finally collapses and passes out in midst of grass and bushes. A wage labourer, Sulubu, finds her and carries her to his hut where he takes care of her for four days, after which she continues on her journey. Later she finds herself in the company of Ruzuna, Kidawa, and Chiku -- three prostitutes who live in the abject poverty and filth of Topea, an area on the outskirts of the city, where slums and shacks are a common sight. All these girls have been forced to drift to the city where they hope to find a better life than the one in the countryside. But to their dismay, they discover that in order to survive in this money-centred life they have to live together in a

crowded shack while selling their bodies to get the badly-needed money. At first, when Rehema encounters them, she is the "naive" country girl who does not understand what can force someone to sell her body. Then she is employed by Mansuri -- a feudal lord -- as a house girl. He tempts Rehema with money and clothes, but Rehema does not agree to sell her body. However, soon, the truth dawns on her, and like Kidawa, Chiku and Ruzuna, she joins the dehumanizing trade. Finally the life tires her and she decides to look for Sulubu. She finds him after a long search and they get married. Together they start a new life on their plot of land. However, the feudal lords do not leave them alone, and soon the land that Sulubu and Rehema develop is taken away from them by the lords, and they are forced to move to another place where they purchase another piece of land. After developing it the feudal lords try again to grab it from them for the second time. This time, however, Sulubu can stand it no more. A struggle ensues in which Sulubu cuts a feudal lord called Karim into pieces. Karim was the one who had headed the move to try to grab Sulubu's piece of land by using the oppressive feudal law system. His death results in Sulubu's arrest and, of course the "law" finds him guilty of murder. This case and its consequent death sentence stir the masses of the poor people -- Rehema and her friends included -- and they rise and protest against it and their exploitation. A violent revolution takes place, and the people manage to overthrow and crush the oppressive feudalistic regime.

The development of the exploited people (represented by Sulubu lit: "Burden"), from beasts of burden to being their own liberators shows their awakening. Sulubu's growth from such a beast of burden

to a self-employed and self-reliant man, to his marriage with Rehema -- symbolic unity of the exploited people -- his awakened consciousness and his final liberation as he kills one of his exploiters by using the same panga he had used to kill his dog when it turned into a great chicken eater, his death sentence, and then the peoples' uprising against it and against the system -- all these are artistically interwoven to give the readers a final clear message as the masses and their army cry out in defence of Sulubu. This taking up of arms is, definitely, a violent overthrow of the system, and Rehema has been shown to be at the centre of this pathway to the establishment of a just system. In this way, Mohamed like Ousmane, has given a different and progressive role to the prostitute. He has shown a different attitude towards her from those of some other authors examined in this thesis. I will draw some more conclusions on the place of the prostitute in Nyota ya Rehema and Les bouts de bois de Dieu after I have analysed her role in my next and last work -- Petals of Blood, by Ngugi wa Thiong'o.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o (formerly James Ngugi), a novelist, playwright and producer and director, short story writer, journalist, essayist, university professor, was born on January 5, 1938 in Limuru Central Province, Kenya. Regarded as the major East African writer in English, Ngugi began his education in a local Mission school in 1946, and in 1947 he joined a Kikuyu school at Karinga where he stayed until 1955 when he entered Alliance High School. In 1959 he entered Makerere University College in Kampala, Uganda. He graduated with a B.A. in 1963 and worked for several months with Nairobi's "Daily Nation" before

leaving for the University of Leeds, England. Here he did his graduate work until 1967 when he returned to Africa and became a special lecturer in English at Nairobi University College. He held that position until the students' strike in January 1969 when he resigned his post in protest against the Administration's and government's handling of the strike. He accepted the position of a visiting professor at Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, U.S.A. in 1970. After Northwestern, Ngugi went back to Kenya where he was made Chairman of the Department of Literature at the University of Nairobi, a post he held until the end of 1977 when he was arrested and detained by the Government of Kenya due to his literary activities. He was released on 12th December, 1978. On his release Ngugi expressed very bitter feelings about arbitrary detentions and the inhuman treatment that detainees underwent. Since his release he has revealed that his unpublished play co-authored with Ngugi wa Mirii - Ngaahika Ndeenda (Kikuyu, meaning "I will Marry When I Want") -- which led to his detention had been very illuminating for him.[23] This observation might imply that Ngugi's future writings and literary activities will be on the same line as Ngaahika Ndeenda.[24]

Ngugi began his literary life by publishing three short stories in the Kenya Weekly News in 1959. He also served as editor of Penpoint -- a student journal at Makerere University College, which encouraged many of the now well-known East African writers. Then, after University he served as the first editor of Zuka (Swahili for "Emerge"), an important journal of reviews and creative writing published by Oxford University Press in Nairobi.

His output includes Weep Not Child, a novel (1964), The River Between,

a novel (1969), A Grain of Wheat, a novel (1967), The Black Hermit, a play (1968), Homecoming: Essays on African and Caribbean Literature, Culture and Politics (1972), Secret Lives and Other Short Stories (1975), This Time Tomorrow, a play (1976), Petals of Blood (1977), a play co-authored with Micere Mugo, The Trial of Dedan Kimathi (1978), and an unpublished play written jointly with Ngugi wa Mirii, Ngaahika Ndeenda. Many of his works have been translated into several languages notably Swahili.

In his early creative works, Ngugi deals with various themes connected with the anti-colonial struggles of the MauMau guerilla fighters, and his later more recent ones examine the struggles of the peasants and workers in not only present-day Kenya but also from a wider context of peasants and workers the world over. His plays and novels embrace readers from all walks of life who are involved in the struggle for the liberation of all exploited people. Thus, we see works such as The Black Hermit, This Time Tomorrow, and Weep Not Child which can be read and understood by primary school leavers and junior secondary school students, and novels such as A Grain of Wheat and Petals of Blood whose audience is mainly the intelligentsia such as university students and scholars, and plays like Ngaahika Ndeenda aimed at educating and mobilizing the "illiterate" villagers while, in fact, delivering the same messages contained in such complex works as Petals of Blood and A Grain of Wheat.[25]

In Petals of Blood, Ngugi expands on a theme he had exploited in his earlier work, This Time Tomorrow, in which he had told a story about "slum clearance" in Nairobi and the resulting tragedies in the lives of poor people. In Petals of Blood, the author picks up the theme, and

this time he looks at the implications of the development of capitalism which completely wipes out a village of Ilmorog. Ngugi's plotting in Petals of Blood, similar to that in A Grain of Wheat is quite complicated since it involves many flashbacks and it moves backwards and forwards.

It would be very hard to give a complete summary of what happens in Petals of Blood, and I will, therefore, pay attention just to those parts which will help in my examination of the role of the prostitute.

In this novel, we witness a village called Ilmorog being infested with capitalist development. Soon it turns into a town after peoples' lands have been stolen, and, typical of all such towns, Ilmorog becomes a centre of money-oriented economy where industries, shops and stores abound. Among them is a foreign-owned Theng'eta Brewery which has its local agents in the form of "directors." So, after the peoples' lands have been grabbed from them through deals they do not even understand, they are then turned into wage labourers who are exploited to the core. However, these people do not remain docile. To quote the back cover of the novel:

> [In Petals of Blood] there are peoples' continuing strivings against a more severe and deadly exploitation by an alliance of foreigners and the class of newly-propertied Africans.

This struggle is aimed at changing the balance of social forces in Ilmorog to change the system which has condemned the poor people to a life of poverty and starvation. The struggle results in the deaths of the local directors of the Theng'eta Brewery; and the novel, which is written in the form of a murder mystery, takes the readers through a long jour-

ney of an investigation into the deaths.

The investigation surrounds four suspects: Munira, the headmaster of Ilmorog Primary School; Karega -- formerly a teacher but now a trade unionist; Abdulla, the shopkeeper whose heroic past in the guerrilla struggle for independence helps to enrich the novel's background action as it relates the past struggles against colonial domination and oppression with the present against neo-colonial suppression and exploitation; and, lastly, Wanja -- a beautiful, resourceful and intelligent prostitute. Although an examination of the roles of each of these main characters would, indeed, yield a better understanding of Petals of Blood, the scope of this thesis limits me to only one major character: Wanja the barmaid and the prostitute. Her connections with the others, however, will have to surface now and then out of necessity.

We meet Wanja right at the beginning of the story when, together with the other three suspects, she is being interrogated and questioned by the police in connection with the murders. At this chronologically late stage in the novel's plot, these four seem to have very little in common, and in fact they seem to belong nowhere between the understanding and wisdom of the world of the old Ilmorog of peasants such as old Nyakinyua and Mwathi wa Mugo on one hand, and that of authority, shrewdness and exploitation of the new Ilmorog of such people as Kimeria, Mzigo, Chui -- the murdered directors, "Reverend" Jarred Brown, and Nderi wa Riera, the M.P. on the other hand. However, through the course of the narration, Wanja and the other three are interwoven and fused together, and to quote Nereas Gicoru:

> The four accused reveal a deep and moving humanity and an enduring relationship of faith and love that binds even tighter as the story of their

intertwined lives unfolds.[26]

From the start when Wanja is serving as a helper at Abdulla's bar, we see in her an understanding and critical person. As Munira views the peasants with the usual ultra-academic eye which glorifies their poverty, claiming that there is dignity in their labor, Wanja retorts: "One with the dust you mean? Haven't you seen the flies on mucus-filled noses? A cowhide or grass for a bed? Huts with falling-in thatches?" (p. 76)

We discover Wanja's bitterness not only against the hardships she has encountered in the countryside, living with her grandmother, but also, especially her previous experiences in the cities:

> Do you know, Abdulla, that all employers are the same? I have worked in many bars. There is only one song sung by all barmaids. Woe. They give you seventy-five shillings a month. They expect you to work for twenty-four hours. In the day time you give beer and smiles to customers. In the evening you are supposed to give them yourself and sighs in bed. Bar and lodging. The owner grabs twenty shillings for letting a couple use a Vono bed and torn sheets for ten minutes .... (pp. 75-76).

In these words there is a serious note of protest against the exploitative system. The words turn into a search for an appropriate measure which will bring lasting changes in the lives of the poor people.

Wanja goes back to the city again, only to return later on and reunite with Munira, Karega and Abdulla at Ilmorog. Whereas, in the first instance Wanja had come to Ilmorog just for a visit, now she uses the countryside as a shelter and an escape from the city and its humiliation. This move, however, serves later on as a symbol of the spreading claws and tentacles of capitalism and its resulting effects.

Meanwhile, Ilmorog is faced with lack of rain and near starvation which kills people, animals and plants. Something must be done, and ultimately Karega, Munira, Wanja, and Abdulla lead a villagers' procession to the city to seek help and assistance for their area from Ilmorog's Member of Parliament. Ngugi has appropriately termed this epic journey "The exodus towards the Kingdom of Knowledge ... Toward Bethlehem," for through it we do not only witness the power of enduring by the exploited people during their struggle, and not only do we learn of the past history when Ilmorog and all Africa controlled its lands and its own affairs, but also the journey gives birth to knowledge of the Mau-Mau forest fighters, knowledge of the reality and role of the Church -- if not all religion and mysticism (here represented by the "Reverend" Jarred Brown) -- in the perpetuation of capitalist domination by turning the peoples' eyes to the promised "bread" in heaven while its ministers, in collaboration with the rich, devour the cake right here on earth. The epic journey reveals also the knowledge about the new elite in the Blue Hills, and also the presence of a new world -- represented by the lawyer, who is later on assassinated -- which is sympathetic to the cause of the poor. The journey also turns into a trek towards the knowledge of the fascist nature of the neo-colonial state when Wanja and her fellow leaders are harassed and arrested by the police. In the midst of all this, the journey becomes the source of our knowledge of the prostitute's humiliation in the modern city as Wanja gives an account of her filthy and dehumanising experience as a barmaid and prostitute. Finally the "exodus" reveals the realities of the exploitative system and that it can not be altered through Members of Parliament such as Nderi wa Riera who are, in fact,

its perpetuators. It becomes knowledge of the truth about the "help" which Members of Parliament can give to the people by entrenching the peoples' lives deep into the exploitation and oppression of the capitalist system. A new Ilmorog is born; and in this New Jerusalem people are turned into wage slaves while shacks, hovels and more poverty become the order of the day. As Ilmorog turns into a "modern" city Wanja too becomes a "respectable" prostitute catering to the needs and lusts of Members of Parliament, Government officials, and businessmen. She grows into a "rich" prostitute, with a big mansion and servants. Yet, deep inside her she knows that all is not well. The questioning she had started earlier in her life when Ilmorog was still a village continues boiling in her. What she sees around her just confirms that Ilmorog has changed for the worse on the side of the poor man. She decides to take action.

The final act of the killings of the local directors by Wanja and the news that Karega receives at the end when he is in jail, of the support of the masses of people behind him, and of the workers unity and formation of the Workers Party, Wakombozi (Lit. "Liberators") -- all these help to end the novel with an "affirmation of faith in eventual triumph" (p. 345). To Wanja, however, it is more than that. It has various implications on her life. Her killing of the Directors is, to her, the beginning of "a kind of grand finale to a career of always being trodden upon, a career of shame and degradation" (p. 329).

How then, can we conclude about the role of the prostitute in Les bouts de bois de Dieu, Nyota ya Rehema, and Petals of Blood?

There is an old literary truism which insists that the soul of

every great story is a journey. Coincidentally, the three works examined are all about journeys and quests. Through the march of the women from Thies to Dakar in Les bouts de bois de Dieu, and Rehema's run in search of happiness and peace in Nyota ya Rehema, and the trek towards the "Kingdom of Knowledge" in Petals of Blood; Penda, Rehema and Wanja have represented the prostitute at a higher and more progressive plane than that of the prostitute characters passed in review before them. Whereas in Mohamed's Kiu, Maillu's A Tail in the Mouth and Sadji's Maimouna, the prostitute was left helplessly on the dungeon of humiliation and her exploitation, whereas in Mongo Beti's Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba, Okello Oculi's Prostitute, Okot p'Bitek's Song of Malaya and Mkufya's The Wicked Walk, the prostitute was shown to be among those who protest bitterly against the oppressive and exploitative colonial and neo-colonial regimes without really participating physically in the struggles to wipe out the humiliating system of capitalism, and whereas in Cyprian Ekwensi's Jagua Nana and Ndyanao Ballisidya's Shida, the prostitute was removed from one form of tight situation to another similar predicament as she moved to the countryside, in Les bouts de bois de Dieu, Nyota ya Rehema, and Petals of Blood the prostitute is portrayed as a fighter who participates physically in the struggle of the workers and peasants.

Through Penda, Rehema, and Wanja -- and all who they associate with in and for the struggle -- we are made conscious of a new society in the process of being born. Wole Soyinka has drawn interesting conclusions concerning Sembene Ousmane's Les bouts de bois de Dieu which, I think, will apply also to Nyota ya Rehema and Petals of Blood. He said, among

other things:

> Sembene's ideology [in Les bouts de bois de Dieu] is implicit, he does not allow its rhetoric intrusion but makes it organic in the process of birth. The strategy of the struggle determines the one ideological resolution translate it how one will. An egalitarian discipline has been enforced upon the community by the goals and ordeals of [its struggles], by the knowledge of colonial [and neo-colonial] indignity with its imposition of an inferior status on the indegene, its wage discrimination and inadequate social facilities.[27]

It has become evident that as Ousmane, Mohamed, and Ngugi have explored the contemporary political, social, and economic circumstances facing Africa, their works have given very constructive guidelines for action to be taken by the poor, exploited people. At the centre of all this are Penda, Rehema and Wanja -- the prostitutes. Through them the immediacy of the situations has given a larger significance to the examination of the action and to the discussions and sharing of views about the methods of action which finally lead to progress towards attaining the economic and political goals.

In Sembene Ousmane's Les bouts de bois de Dieu as in Mohamed S. Mohamed's Nyota ya Rehema, there is a voice which questions the neo-colonial governments and regimes, challenging them to prove how different they are from the colonial and feudalistic exploiters. In Ousmane's latest novel, Xala, he has developed the challenge through a devastating satire of the neo-colonial bourgeoisie which is greedy, self-centred, and generally unable to create any good and lasting changes in the peoples' lives. It is this class of people that Wanja and others of her class fight against in Petals of Blood. The act of burning the local directors of Theng'eta Brewery to death is symbolic of the be-

ginning of violent struggle against the ruling petit-bourgeois class.

In these struggles where the prostitute is at the centre, we discover dimensions which go beyond the frontiers of Senegal, Tanzania, and Kenya to embrace all the neo-colonies where the ruling regimes are oblivious of the masses' needs and predicaments. The solutions are discovered in the actions, leadership and struggles of Penda, Rehema, and Wanja. The solution lies in wiping out the exploiting classes and taking over of all economic and political power by the workers. Ousmane has stressed this in Xala where El Hadji Kader Beye recovers his sexual potency only after beggars and cripples and all poor people in town have washed his sins by spitting on him.

In a somewhat moralizing novel called Sous L'Orage (1957) Seydou Badian -- an author from Mali -- makes one of his characters, a militant woman called Sidi, remark that the emancipation of women is a key issue in social revolutions. Such a remark, I think, is well taken and has been put to practice in Les bouts de bois de Dieu, Nyota ya Rehema and Petals of Blood. The prostitutes in these novels represent such an emancipation which emerges naturally from moments of crisis. We see women in Ousmane's novel, being led by Penda, rising to the occasion, utilizing all the resources that they can get. We see Wanja leading the "exodus" to the city and finally dealing a telling blow to Theng'eta Brewery; and we see Rehema joining the popular uprising which overthrows the feudalistic regime and sets Sulubu free.

The question of the liberation of women has had very many misinterpretations especially during the so-called International Women's Year, 1975. Often it has been misinterpreted to mean the struggle for the woman to free herself from the domination of the man. It has been

vulgarized and seen as a mechanical equality between men and women. In this way this minor contradiction has been magnified to the point of blurring the major contradiction: that of workers and peasants against their exploitation by the bourgeois ruling classes and their capitalist system. This has been, of course, a direct attempt to divide the poor struggling masses according to sexes. While it is true that some women suffer from being treated by men as little better than commodities, as tools of labor and objects of pleasure, it is important -- and this has been illustrated in the three novels -- to note that only through the liberation of workers and peasants can true liberation of women be attained. In other words, by linking the liberation of the used and downtrodden women such as Penda, Rehema, and Wanja with the overall struggle to liberate the whole class of workers and peasants, the three novels have taken the right and revolutionary way out of the hard life of the prostitute. In Nyota ya Rehema in particular, the revolution in which Rehema, and her fellow prostitutes participate together with the other poor people prove that the starting point of the exploitation of women and their consequent oppression rest on the system of private ownership of the major means of production. Thus, through the novels examined, it has become clear that apart from the specificity of the situation of the women -- which has been largely due to historical and even biological conditions -- the antagonistic contradiction is not between men and women. Rather, it is between men and women who belong to the lower classes on the one hand and the upper, ruling class and the capitalist system they control and attempt to perpetuate on the other hand. Therefore, Penda in Les bouts de bois de Dieu is shown to be a growing character ideologically as she realizes

the above fact, casts aside her former hatred of men, and joins hands with them in the struggle for their rights.

We can conclude that the large spectrum of African literature which we have examined has indicated clearly that the position and role of the prostitute in the literature have been looked at with a progressive, even revolutionary eye in such works as Les bouts de bois de Dieu, Nyota ya Rehema and Petals of Blood. It has indicated that the prostitute in African literature has already realized that her emancipation and her liberation requires her to enter the political milieu, not in the Jagua Nana style where she tries to take crumbs from the beards of Uncle Namis, but like Penda, Rehema, and Wanja who mobilize their grievances into political struggle of the workers. This has been shown, in the three novels, to be the only way out. And it is.

NOTES

1 Adrian A. Roscoe, Mother is Gold: A Study in West African Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), p. 87.

2 See Janheinz Jahn et al. (eds.), Who's Who in African Literature: Biographies, Works, Commentaries (Tubingen: Horst Erdmann Verlag, 1972), p. 121.

3 Op. cit., p. 87.

4 Donald E. Herdeck, African Authors: A Companion to Black African Writing - 1300 to 1973 (Washington: Black Orpheus, 1973), p. 131.

5 John Povey, "Cyprian Ekwensi: The Novelist and the Pressure of the City," Edgar Wright (ed.), The Critical Evaluation of African Literature (London/Ibadan/Nairobi: Heinemann, 1973), p. 83.

6 See his "The African Personality in the African Novel," in Ulli Beier (ed.), Introduction to African Literature: An Anthology of Critical Writing From 'Black Orpheus' (Evanston: North Western University Press, 1967), pp. 218-33.

7 Ibid., p. 223.

8 For the interested reader, the following works, among numerous others can help to give a representational cross-section of critics' views and attitudes towards Ekwensi's works: Margareth Laurence, "Masks of the City: Cyprian Ekwensi," in her Long Drums and Cannons: Nigerian Dramatists and Novelists 1952-1966 (London/Melbourne/Toronto, 1968), pp. 148-68; Bernth Lindfors, "Cyprian Ekwensi: An African Popular Novelist," African Literature Today, 3 (1969), pp. 2-14; Wilfred Cartey, "The Lost Generation ... Urban Political Reality," in his Whispers From a Continent: The Literature of Contemporary Black Africa (New York: Random House, 1969), pp. 143-205; Adrian Roscoe, Mother is Gold: A Study in West African Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971); Eustace Palmer, An Introduction to the African Novel (London/Ibadan/Nairobi: Heinemann, 1972), pp. IX-XIII; Elechi Amadi, "The Novel in Nigeria," Afriscope, 4 (1973), pp. 40-41, 43, 49; O.R. Dathorne, The Black Mind: A History of African Literature (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1974); Russel J. Linnemann, "Structuralist Weaknesses in Ekwensi's Jagua Nana," English in Africa, 4 (1976), pp. 36-39; Anthony Obidale, "The Chronicles and the New Generation: A Review of Ekwensi's Recent Writings," African Studies Review, 20 (1976), pp. 127-30.

9 See his "Cyprian Ekwensi: An African Popular Novelist," African Literature Today, 3 (1969), pp. 2-14.

[10] See his "Preface" to his book, An Introduction to the African Novel (London/Ibadan/Nairobi: Heinemann, 1972), pp. ix-xiii.

[11] Ibid., p. xii.

[12] Ibid., p. xii.

[13] Ibid,, pp. xii-xiii.

[14] This paper is available as mineo from the Institute of Kiswahili Research, University of Dar-es-Salaam.

[15] I have discussed this motif of the movement back to the countryside in the Swahili novel in my unpublished M.A. Thesis, "Riwaya ya Kiswahili na Maendeleo ya [Jamii]" (Lit. "The Swahili Novel and the Development of Society") (Idara Ya Kiswahili, University of Dar-es-Salaam, 1977), and also in my "Remarks on Current Ideological Trends in the Swahili Novel," Paper presented at the African Studies Association meeting, Baltimore, Maryland, 1978, African Studies Association Archives 1979 (Waltham: Brandeis University, A.S.A., 1979).

[16] For a detailed and well-argued account and examination of the theme of the movement back to the countryside in some Swahili plays see Jesse Mollel, "Towards a Genuine African Theatre: Tradition and Innovation in the Drama of Penina Muhando," an unpublished M.A. Thesis (University of Alberta, 1979).

[17] Oddly enough, a reading of this novel brings to mind the words of Aime Cesaire in his long poem Cahier d'un retour au pays natal (Paris: Presence Africaine, 1956) (English version; Return to my Native Land, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969):

> My name is Bordeaux and Nantes and Liverpool and
> New York and San Francisco
> not a corner of this world but carries my thumb-print
> and my heal-mark on the backs of skyscrapers
> any my dirt
> in the glitter of jewels!
> Who can boast of more than I?
> Virginia. Tennessee. Georgia. Alabama ...
> (pp. 52-53)

This association could as well be a proof that in Le Docker Noir Sembene Ousmane managed to express his message which Jahn, Schild and Nordmann must have failed to grasp, after all.

[18] Op. cit., p. 392.

[19] Wole Soyinka, Myth, Literature and the African World (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 117.

[20] Dorothy S. Blair, African Literature in French: A History of Creative Writing in French From West and Equatorial Africa (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 237.

[21] Donald Carter, "Sympathy and Art: Novels and Short Stories," Eldred Durosimi Jones (ed.), African Literature Today: 5 - The Novel in Africa (London, Ibadan, Nairobi: Heinemann, 1971; and New York: Africana, 1971), p. 139.

[22] Wilfred Cartey, Whispers From a Continent: The Literature of Contemporary Black Africa (New York: Random House, 1969), p. 180.

[23] For a detailed account of Ngugi wa Thiong'o's views and ideas after his release from detention see his interview in Weekly Review (Nairobi) (January 5, 1979).

[24] I have discussed and examined this play, among Ngugi's other works in my "Ngugi na Ukombozi wa Mtu Mnyonge" (Lit. "Ngugi and the Liberation of the Poor Man"), paper presented during "Usiku wa Ngugi wa Thiong'o" ("Ngugi wa Thiong'o's Evening") A symposium held at the University of Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, 30 January 1978 to protest against Ngugi's detention. The paper is soon to be published together with others, by Shungwaya Publishers, Nairobi.

Jesse Mollel too has given an interesting examination of the play vis a vis the general situation of African Theatre in his "Towards A Genuine African Theatre: Tradition and Innovation in the Drama of Penina Muhando," An unpublished M.A. Thesis (University of Alberta, 1979).

[25] A clear and early indication of Ngugi's influence in his work is in the great and happy participation of the villagers in the production of his co-authored play Ngaahika Ndeenda which led to his consequent detention. Also another indication of such influence on some of his university students can be witnessed, I think, in their bold and courageous article, "Education and the University Must Serve the Majority of Kenyans: A Preliminary Critique of the University Education, Culture and Writers in Kenya, Utafiti Vol. 2, No. 2 (1977), pp. 163-200.

[26] Nereas Gicoru, "Towards the Kingdom of Knowledge: Petals of Blood by Ngugi wa Thiong'o," Joe: Africa's Entertainment Monthly August (1977), p. 25.

[27] Op. Cit., p. 118.

CHAPTER FOUR

FURTHER AVENUES OF EXPLORATION: THE PROSTITUTE IN WORLD LITERATURE

Our examination of the position and role of the prostitute in African literature has been limited to the African scene. This alone has proved to be a big task, for, in spite of the considerable length of the discussion, much still remains to be looked into. The survey has, thus, been only selectively representative rather than exhaustive.

This means that there are still many other avenues through which the subject can be explored. It is so because, although it is true that there are many social and literary features unique to African literature, there are, still, many elements in the literature of the "general" traditions too. Thus, one other fruitful and interesting approach would be to look at the prostitute in African literature vis a vis the prostitute's position and role in other world literatures. Since it is practically impossible to exhaust such a wide subject within a single chapter in an M.A. thesis, it must be stressed here that our conslusion is really only a further beginning, an indication of work yet to be done.

The subject of prostitutes and prostitution in African literature has relatively little discussion devoted to it in criticism. Most times it has been treated as "secondary" literature which deserves less space in criticism and discussions than the other "primary" and "serious" subjects. The thesis has, so far proved the above stand to be wrong, for even in works with serious subjects such as the protest against colonialism or neo-colonialism, the prostitute has always been present -- perhaps to the dismay of "serious" and "strict" scholars

and critics.

It remains now for others to relate the survey of prostitutes in African literature with possible sources of prostitute stereotypes -- if any -- from European literatures. Prostitution has been with us for a very long time. Written African literature (in significant quantities) is a recent phenomenon. In Europe it is an old one. Yet scholars of European letters have also paid surprisingly little attention to the topic. And even the vast majority of non-literary books hardly make reference to the subject. Its antiquity notwithstanding, the subject has only infrequently been probed into by serious historians. Vern L. Bullough has attempted to give some reasons for this attitude saying:

> The reason for the unwillingness to treat with the subject is obvious; prostitution not only deals with sex, but it is a type of sexual activity which [most people would condemn]. Any kind of sex has been an almost forbidden subject for scholars, especially historians, until comparatively recent times, and prostitution, a deviant sexual behaviour, has been even more tabooed.[1]

Literary culture exhibits this same attitude and lags behind its timid exploration in other fields. Nevertheless, such an attitude seems to be almost exclusively displayed by literary critics who have evaded the subject, rather than by the actual writers of literature, who have recognized the prostitute since time immemorial.

The question of the prostitute in the early societies before the art of writing was invented is of no consequence to this work, since the major concern here is to examine her role and position in written literatures. We leave the assignment of pre-literate investigation to

historians and archaeologists. Our best starting point is yet to be determined, but it is, perhaps with the Hammurabic Code of the Tigrus-Euphrates Valley (known now as Mesopotamia) -- an area which has the honour and privilege of being the origin of the oldest civilization recognised as such by modern researchers.

Hebrew literature -- specifically the Bible -- is full of stories of prostitutes and prostitution. The episode of Tamar, the daughter-in-law of Judah is an example of such stories. Cast aside by her husband, Tamar resorts to prostituting herself even to the extent of sleeping with her father-in-law. The story of Rahab the harlot, and that of Samson the Nazarite who was not condemned after visiting the prostitute in Gaza -- all these show how the ancient Hebrew society openly accepted prostitution as a way of life. Yet, at the core of all these rested the question of the oppression of the woman and also that of cash relations between people. The story of Cheops, for example, who had to send his daughter into a brothel so that he could collect the money he so badly needed for building his pyramid, and the development of the incident so that the daughter required each customer to bring her one stone in addition to the fee (with the stones she managed to build her own pyramid which was over 150 feet tall), is a clear example of the relations between money and prostitution in this society. Much more biblical and Christian literature would be grist for the mill of this study.

The most open and blunt literature about prostitutes in the ancient slavery times was that of the Greeks. Among these people, prostitution was openly accepted as a way of life too. Prostitution in this society took various forms -- from that practiced by the pornoi, by ex-hetairae

to flute players.[2] In midst of all these were the religious prostitutes too who served to secure wealth for the "religious" institutions; in modern terms the guardians of these institutions acted as pimps and call-house madams. It would be interesting to hear the views of some African writers such as Mongo Beti and the Swahili novelist Euphrase Kezilahabi concerning the Temple and "religious" prostitutes, since their works (Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba and Rosa Mistika (1972), respectively) associate the Church with prostitution in more or less similar terms.

As a working hypothesis for further investigation we might assume that it was not until the publication of Daniel Defoe's Moll Flanders that the veil of sex taboo in literature was really lifted. Defoe (1660-1731) is remembered mainly for works he wrote in the late part of his life over a period of only five years. His first novel was Robinson Crusoe (1717) and his last was Roxana (1724). In all of his works there is fierce individualism which permeates his stories. In them there is a sense of loneliness and the individual struggling against various economic, social, and political forces.

In Moll Flanders, the main character is Moll, a prostitute. She is an underprivileged girl who, like Bahati in Kiu and the other prostitutes we have come across in African literature, has to go into prostitution in order to survive the hard times. Her story represents those of many girls who turned into prostitutes in Daniel Defoe's time. After being separated from her mother at the tender age of eighteen months, the little girl befriended a group of "gypsies or Egyptians." Later on, after being abandoned by the group, Moll was forced to become a ward of the local parish until she was fourteen. Then she was taken

into the service of a kind woman who treated her as one of her daughters. Later the eldest son of the woman became Moll's lover and she his mistress. Finally Moll got married to her own brother after whose death she passed through a series of different types of lives including twelve years of prostitution. Ultimately, Moll grew rich, lived an "honest" life and died a good woman.

In order to understand Moll's life, one needs necessarily to know what the political and economic conditions were like in England during Daniel Defoe's era. At that time individual economic enterprise and private ownership of the means of production had already taken root, and cash relations between people were the order of the day. (An interesting hypothesis to test would be to see if the prostitute under capitalism occurs with any frequency as a conscious symbol of mature capitalism's creation, the proletariat as a self-conscious class.) One approach to Defoe's novels, probably the best approach, would be through his own many pamphlets on contemporary economic conditions. Through the pamphlets and the novels, especially Moll Flanders and Roxana (or Unfortunate Mistress), we see the unprotected woman in society, who is excluded from most economic enterprises of young capitalism, denied education, and vetoed out of any chances for her to earn a living. In these hard circumstances the only alternatives left for her are marriage and, if not lucky enough to get married, prostitution. This is typical in all societies where all the major means of production are in the hands of the upper ruling classes. It is certainly the case in the feudal world of M.S. Mohamed's novel, Kiu, in which Bahati is forced into prostituting herself in order to get some kind of social and economic security through her marriage with Idi.

In most of these societies money determines relations between people. Even Moll admits that a young woman is nobody if she has no money -- beauty, good manners, modesty, and all good qualities notwithstanding. Her whole life is surrounded by money worship, and she has to do all she can -- even selling her body for twelve years -- so she can get the money. This has been the case with all the prostitutes we have examined in African literature.

Defoe has used Moll Flanders and even Roxana to show that there are still ways out of the prostitute's humiliation. However, his optimism seems to be based on the idea that the way out is to make the best out of the situation. Thus, even though at the beginning of Moll Flanders the author has deplored the absence of national orphanages where children of poor people could be trained "to provide for themselves by an honest industrious behavior" he does not follow this criticism up -- utopian though the idea behind it is. Instead he has suggested that the best that poor girls like Moll can do is to try all they can and somehow get something out of their predicament. In Roxana this approach is even more glaring. Roxana reasons that since she has been endowed with a beautiful body which stirs the lusts of men, then the best thing for her is to utilize it to the last stretch. She therefore prostitutes herself to rich and renowned customers who make her "successful" and rich. This kind of attitude is similar to that in Okot p'Bitek's Song of Malaya in which the prostitute wishes "health and wealth" to all her fellow-prostitutes, and urges them to do all they can to squeeze dry the bulging pockets of their rich customers.

Much criticism has been written concerning Daniel Defoe's Moll

Flanders. An examination of a few of the critical works will provide either models of discussion or parallels with those done in African literature concerning the prostitute in that literature. Among the critical writings, many refer indiscriminately to Moll as an "immoral" woman and to her life as "wicked," "half a century of sin," and so on. These seem to have taken the religious-cum-moralistic approach which has, as a consequence, failed to examine Moll's social circumstances in the right and scientific perspective. Godfrey Davies "introduction"[3] to the novel is one such article. Although Davies makes very good points and comments about Moll Flanders in this "Introduction," his work is too apologetic for Defoe so that it boils down to a mere justification of whatever happens in the novel; and he does not indicate any possibilities for a change in the lives of prostitutes, in spite of his correct suggestion that we relate whatever happens to Moll with the economic conditions of England in Defoe's time.

Virginia Woolf[4] has made a short, interesting analysis of Moll Flanders vis a vis other Defoe novels in her article "Defoe." She has shown how each of Defoe's girls and boys in his works "has the world to begin and the battle to fight for himself," and thus, Moll's world is goaded "by that worst of devils, poverty," Virginia Woolf then relates Moll's and Roxana's struggles with today's struggles of women's rights advocates although she does not expand on this. Her article is very enlightening and can help towards an understanding of Moll Flanders in spite of its branding Moll a "seasoned old sinner."

Alan Dugald McKillop's article, "Genuine Artistic Intent"[5] is one of the most analytical and informed on Moll Flanders to date. To quote one of his most interesting observations:

> In Moll Flanders (January, 1722, dated 1721), above all the other works, Defoe combines his conception of character as brought out by immediate practical problems, his sense of social and economic reality, his selective and vivid presentation of detail significant for action, his application of bourgeois success philosophy in a dangerous hinterland beyond the limits of respectability.[6]

The article has also shown how girls like Moll are victims of the socio-economic setup of society. It has illustrated too how in Moll Flanders Defoe has portrayed the operations of economic and social compulsions. McKillop in this article has even touched on the subject of incest in Moll Flanders saying:

> The later discovery that the Virginian planter [Moll] has married is her half brother mars the narrative with the coarse incest [motif] that sometimes intrudes in early popular fiction.[7]

Curiously enough the incest motif appears as has been indicated already, in W.E. Mkufya's novel, The Wicked Walk in which it is carried as far as giving results of an offspring, a girl called Nancy, who is forced into prostitution too. The appearance of the motif in The Wicked Walk is in all probability, a coincidence rather than a borrowing from Moll Flanders, for no other similarities between the novel are evident.

Among other critics of Defoe's novels, Ian Watt, Douglas Brooks, and Everett Zimmerman are worth mentioning. In their words, "Defoe as Novelist: Moll Flanders,"[8] Number and Pattern in the Eighteenth-Century Novel,[9] and "Moll Flanders: Parodies of Respectability,"[10] respectively, the authors have attempted to relate the formal aspects

of the novel and its social contents. Ian Watt's work has concentrated on the way Defoe has utilized irony to concretize his message in Moll Flanders. Douglas Brooks has shown that in Defoe's Robinson Crusoe, Moll Flanders, Captain Singleton, Colonel Jack, and Roxana, there are many recurring patterns which, when related to Defoe's use of numerological tradition can help greatly in the understanding and appreciation of the morals and messages in the novels. Zimmerman's article has illustrated how in Moll Flanders the author has attempted to "measure the impercipience of his narrator" and has tried "to show the full moral of his fable by developing a third perspective, intermittent but discernible"; and together with the examination of Defoe's narrative style Zimmerman has examined the author's use of parody, and has concluded that:

> Defoe's reliance on parody reveals his difficulty in imaginging any authentic values. When Moll disintegrates, Defoe fails to define any moral world that exists outside her consciousness. Like Moll, he presumably accepts a Christian view of repentance and redemption ...[11]

Further examination of Watt's, Brooks' and Zimmerman's works would, indeed, be very interesting and helpful towards an understanding of the world of Moll Flanders. However, since that is out of the boundaries of this thesis, I have just chosen to mention them summarily here as a way of indicating one further avenue through which the topic of the prostitute in African literature could be explored, i.e. formalist criticism. Although this avenue has been given a lesser space in this thesis due to the work's limitations of its subject, it is worth mentioning here that the questions of such formal features as

the use of irony, parodies, narrative point of view, time manipulation, characterization, and other technical aspects of works of literature can, and indeed do, lead to a better and deeper understanding of the role and position of not only the prostitute but all other characters in African literature.

After Defoe a number of works of literature were written with the prostitute as one of their major characters, if not the main one. John Cleland's Fanny Hill: Memoirs of a Lady of Pleasure, is one example among many. Fanny, a daughter of poor parents who lived in a small village near Liverpool, had the misfortune of both her parents dying of smallpox when she was fifteen. She was abandoned by a cunning male friend who lured her to the city (a typical motif in African works) and was thus forced to apply for employment at the house of a certain Mrs. Brown. Here she is trapped again as the Mrs. Brown is, in actual fact, the operator of a bordello. Fanny's adventures and misadventures started with a lesbian experience, and then she was sold to a certain merchant who tried to seduce her but failed. Later on she entered another brothel, and by luck, managed to inherit a huge fortune by helping an old man; then she was married to a young man, after which she became a great lady and, as so often happens in literature, "lived happily ever after." In spite of its obvious weaknesses similar to the ones mentioned about Defoe's Moll Flanders, Fanny Hill became a bestseller and was published in numerous editions which, as usual, enriched the publisher but not the author.

There is an obvious similarity between Moll Flanders and Fanny Hill on the one hand, and some literary works from Africa such as

Ekwensi's Jagua Nana and Balisidya's Shida on the other hand, in their treatments of the prostitute. Adrian Roscoe has spoken about this similarity, saying:

> A familiar theme that ran through Elizabethan and Restoration drama and into the fiction of Defoe, Richardson, Fielding, and Cleland, reappears in [an African] setting; and what London meant for Moll, Joseph Andrews, Tom, Clarissa, and Fanny, Lagos, Accra [and Dar-es-Salaam] mean to a variety of Ekwensi's [and Balisidya's] characters -- all born in the countryside and all lured by various temptations into the city.[12]

It is not convincing, however, to argue that perhaps the pattern appears in African literature as a stereotype taken from European literature. This would be a condescending, if not a slavish, approach. The probable fact here is that the similarities indicate that one of the major forces which breeds prostitutes and prostitution is the city-countryside conflict -- itself an outcome and indication of a capitalist economy. This, however, might have some isolated exceptions in Ekwensi's Jagua Nana, as shall be seen later.

19th Century European literature is full of prostitutes, the most famous being Emile Zola's Nana (1880), a work widely known in Africa. Nana, the greedy, vulgar, cruel and beautiful prostitute lives a luxurious life, ruining, hurting and even disgracing her various customers and lovers. Nana was formerly a streetwalker and later on, in spite of her lack of talent for the stage, turned into an actress -- a career which made her a star mainly due to her beautiful face, good figure and "loving" reputation. In Nana Zola makes a bitter criticism of the Second French Empire represented symbolically by the prostitute. To quote the back cover of the Penguin English trans-

lation of the novel:

> Nana is an evocation of the glittering, corrupt world of the Second French Empire, where prostitution played an important part at all levels. Prompted by his theories of heredity and environment, Zola set out to show Nana, 'the golden fly,' rising out of the underworld to feed on society. Nana's latent destructiveness is mirrored in the Empire's, and they reflect each other's disintegration and final collapse in 1870.[13]

Zola in Nana, therefore, has portrayed the prostitute, showing all her selfishness, pettiness, vice, even cruelty at times, and her goodness too, while utilizing her to criticize the socio-politico-economic system of France under the Second French Empire. Nana's death due to smallpox has been shown to represent the fall of the Empire, and in this case Zola's position of the prostitute and her role in his work has taken a wider socio-politico-economic symbolic representation. If we are not at a stage in literary history where we can point some specific influences of this work on African literature, it has allowed us at least to feel more confident in our symbolical interpretation of prostitutes and prostitution in several works in earlier chapters. In African literature, Zola's Nana seems to have had an undisputable influence on the creation of one particular work: Cyprian Ekwensi's Jagua Nana. Although not a naturalist, the author has created Jagua Nana -- the heroine -- who has several resemblances with Nana. Aside from some similarities in the physical characteristics and in the characters of the two heroines, there is, of course, the similarity in names. This has made some critics of African literature such as Donald E. Herdeck conclude without hesitation that Nana was chosen be-

cause Ekwensi was no doubt "thinking of Emile Zola's flesh-pot heroine of the Second Empire of France."[14] Michael Crowder too has placed Ekwensi's Jagua Nana "in the more European tradition."[15] Besides being namesakes, the two heroines have been linked artistically to the socio-political systems prevailing in their societies so that while Zola's Nana represents the corrupt world of the Second French Empire, the fusion of the politician and the prostitute which has been shown in Ekwensi's Jagua Nana, has made the heroine at that point, a symbol of the corruption and rottenness of politicians and of the petit-bourgeois political parties in the neo-colonies.

This pre-survey of the treatment of the prostitute in some well-known examples of world literature has indicated a number of different approaches drawn from non-African literature which can be used in looking at the role of the prostitute in African literature. Other approaches prerequisite to a proper comparative study would be thorough investigations into literary histories of two or three countries in whose literatures the prostitute appears, and also through aesthetic criticism of the literatures. A comparative analysis of the role and position of the prostitute in literatures of various, different times and cultures has also been shown to be a fruitful exercise. Also, one further avenue would be to examine the role of censorship in determining how authors should treat their prostitute characters in their works. This avenue has been hinted at in the examination of Oculi's Prostitute and W.E. Mkufya's The Wicked Walk. Further and detailed examination of the operations of censorship in various countries where prostitutes have featured and continue to feature in literature would, probably, lead to a better understanding of the

position and role of the prostitute in the relevant literatures. This is among the important avenues of further exploration into the question of the prostitute in African literature, especially because censorship seems in general to be quite a great and subtle problem for writers under not only colonialism but even more under neo-colonialism. Comparison between different neo-colonial regimes' policies of censorship could be very relevant in the discussion of this topic.

Among other avenues, an interesting one would be further research into the theme of sin and punishment in Abdoulaye Sadji's novel Maimouna to see if it has been influenced by such literatures as the Koran and even such works like Dostoyevsky's Crime and Punishment. This, perhaps, could reveal the fact of a literary influence on an author's work so that his or her notion of prostitutes and prostitution is revealed to be more stylized than realistic.

Finally, another fruitful way of looking at the question would be to concentrate on non-literary treatments of prostitution which put other parameters around "realism" and prostitution, such as psychoanalysis, sociology, political treatises and so on.

It is hoped that these suggested avenues will in some future work, lead to further exploration into the question of the position and role of the prostitute in African literature -- a broad, interesting, and serious subject in spite of the critics' neglect of it.

NOTES

[1] Vern L. Bullough and Bonnie L. Bullough, The History of Prostitution (New York: University Books, 1964), p. 3.

[2] For further information on the practices of prostitutes among the ancient Greeks see (among other works): Vern L. Bullough and Bonnie L. Bullough, The History of Prostitution (New York: University Books, 1964), pp. 31-44; Hans Licht, Sexual Life in Ancient Greece, trans, J.H. Freese and ed. by Lawrence H. Dawson (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1932); Frederick Engels, Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1969).

[3] Unfortunately in Univ. of Alberta library's copy of Moll Flanders in which the "Introduction" appears, the page with the name of publisher and date of publication is missing.

[4] In her article, "Defoe," in Leonard Woolf (ed.), The Common Reader (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1925), pp. 89-97.

[5] From The Early Masters of English Fiction (Lawrence: Univ. of Kansas Press, 1956), pp. 28-33.

[6] Ibid., p. 28.

[7] Ibid., p. 28.

[8] From his The Rise of the Novel (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1957; London: Chatto and Windus, 1957), pp. 119-31.

[9] (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973).

[10] In his Defoe and the Novel (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: Univ. of California, 1975), pp. 75-106.

[11] Ibid., p. 106.

[12] Adrian A. Roscoe, Mother is Gold: A Study in West African Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1971), p. 88.

[13] Back cover of Zola's Nana, trans. George Holden (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972).

[14] Donald E. Herdeck, African Authors: A Companion to Black African Writing 1300-1973 (Washington: Black Orpheus, 1973), p. 131.

[15] Michael Crowder, "Tradition and Change in Nigerian Literature," in The Bulletin of the Association for African Literature in English 3 (1965), p. 12.

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